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OR,  
The Kilkenny Cats of 'Way-Up.

BY JOS. E. BADGER, JR.,

AUTHOR OF "OLD '49," "REVOLVER ROB,"  
"JOAQUIN, THE SADDLE KING," "EQUINOX TOM," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

A SPHINX ON THE BOX-SEAT.

"Ef ye'll lis'en to a fool 'bout my size o'make, pard, ye'll take a tum'le off o'this box the fu'st bit o'soft sand we come to, an' ye'll be so eternally cornfused by the accident that ye'll turn yer head with the onseein' part of it this way, an' then foller yer nose ontel it kerries ye to a heap healthier locate then a man o' yer eyes an' gin'ral git-up o' face an' figger kin ever hope to find at 'Way-up!"

"Do they hang a man there for his beauty?"

"When I ain't a-lookin', I can't see, an' when I can't see, I can't hear," steadily added Cap Hicks, with his crooked eyes staring over the pointed ears of his leaders as though searching for that particular bit of sandy soil. "I hain't axed your name, nur I couldn't say much one way nur t'other ef I was called on to 'scribe the



"PASS ON, DRIVER. I'LL SETTLE THIS TOLL BUSINESS FOR ALL!" ORDERED  
THE NAMELESS.

## The Nameless Sport.

way ye looked or the way ye was rigged out as to duds an' sich. I'm hired to drive the ambulance. I ain't paid to take fortygraphs o' them as pays fer a lift over my route. The laws an' regulations don't say I've got to ax why an' what fer a passenger drops off by the wayside. Long's he's paid in advance, an' does the drop act o' his own free will, 'tain't no consarn o' mine."

"But if a man don't take the hint and tumble at the same t me?" laughed the other occupant of the box-seat.

"They's a good spot right yender, whar a springy sort o' critter might 'most think he was drappin' down on a feather bed," added Cap Hicks, his tones slightly quivering, his cross-eyes flashing a side glance toward his companion. "My ears is plugged up, an' they's the durndest sort o' fog comin' into the two eyes o' me! Jest a slip-back over the ruff, a drap-down ahind, an' the insides won't never tell when nur how the Mary Ann lost one o' the live freight down onto her waybill. Es fer me—I've smoked yer seegars an' sampled yer whisky. I ain't lookin' fer no money but that I gits fer drivin' my trip. Now—durned ef I hain't got to whistle an' sing!"

The lids had closed tightly over the crooked eyes, and Cap Hicks broke into a droning chant that caused every ear in the team to point backward, as with the suspicion of a wolf-haunted trail.

A hand gently closed upon his shoulder, and turning his crossed eyes, Cap Hicks beheld the open nozzle of a liquor flask confronting him, while a pair of blue eyes seconded the almost pathetic voice:

"Do you have to do it *that* way, Cap? Couldn't you use a club, or a billy, or something of that sort. Isn't it enough to insist on a poor devil's breaking a leg or a back or a neck, without first softening his brain, and—drink hearty, pard."

The worthy driver obeyed. A mechanical sigh of great content escaped from his lips as he lowered the flask, but there was nothing of this visible in his face or eyes as he spoke again:

"You've paid yer fare, an' that gives ye a right to ride ez far's the ole hearse goes. I wouldn't hev no right to chuck ye off, ef I wanted to, ever so. I couldn't ax fur a gent as is more of a gent, taking it by the way you've treated me this run. But I'd ruther a month's pay that you'd never hit the Mary Ann fer a lift while her nose is p'nted to 'rds 'Way-up."

"You really talk as though you meant it, Cap."

Cap Hicks turned and squarely faced his companion on the box seat, and though his eyes seemed to be looking in any other direction, there was a glow in their depths that told how wholly in earnest their owner was as he hurriedly muttered:

"Mebbe it ain't none o' my business. Mebbe you've got a right to act jest as you durned please, an' mebbe I'm a cussed fool fer tryin' ter put on ther brake without your say-so. Mebbe it'd be money in my pocket if I held my hush on 'tel we run right into the Black or the White gang, an' then ketch you foul holds an' holler out yer name. Mebbe that's the game some critters would play, but I ain't that sort."

"The man that says you are not white as snow, Cap, is a villain an' a horse-thief, but—"

"They's them in 'Way-up as kin see jest as fur's I kin. They's them in 'Way-up as 'll be only too hot fer blood-money ter let sech a chance slip by 'em. But, wu'st of all, they's them in 'Way-up as 'd heap ruther pay the reward double times over then let you git off, or even hev time fer to tell your side of the story. An' knowin' this, I say ag'in, good-by! Drap off as I slow up, an' devil the whisper they'll get out o' me. I'll be comin' back to-morrow, an' you kin hev the same seat goin' back, ef I hev ter chuck a critter overboard to make room."

"You mean it, and therefore I thank you just as heartily as though I understood what you mean, Cap," a little more gravely uttered the passenger.

"I ain't axin' ye to own up. I'd a leetle ruther ye wouldn't, fer 'spicionin' ain't knowin', an' ef ever the two bosses should get wind o' this foolishness, it wouldn't sound quite so much like a lie, puttin' em off the right scent. Ef you'll go—"

"Right into 'Way-up, of course, Cap."

A look of utter disgust came into the weather-beaten face of Cap Hicks as he met that steady gaze.

"You mean it, pard?"

"Sure as fate, Cap," was the laughing response. "Why not? I believe 'Way-up is free to all respectable characters?"

"Not ef his fu'st name's Prince Amory!"

"A friend of yours, Cap?"

"I thought he was afore he axed me that question. But now—"

Cap Hicks turned abruptly away, tightening his reins and making the silken cracker snap viciously about the ears of his leaders.

A brief silence, broken by a low, soft laugh and the words:

"Is that it, old fellow? I've run right up against a romance, have I? It's a case of 'the fellow who looks like me,' is it?"

"It's a case of a rope an' a hangin', ruther," growled the driver, but turning again toward his passenger.

"As bad as that?" uttered the other, his dark brows arching. "I'm sadly afraid you've been keeping bad company, old fellow! You said this—Prince Something-or-other—was a friend of yours, I think?"

"Do you say he ain't, pard?" slowly demanded Hicks, his voice husky, his crossed eyes filling with sudden emotion.

"Do I?" with an echo of surprise. "He may be your twin brother, for aught I know to the contrary."

"He ain't that, but one time when I was mighty low—when I was flat on my back in wuss than a quicksand—he tuck me by the han' an' set me onto my pins ag'in. He stood by me when nobody else'd so much as lift a finger to save me from the devil. That's the sort o' fri'nd Prince Amory was. But now—"

Once more the unoffending leaders had to suffer, and the coach reeled and creaked on its leathern springs until indignant cries came from the inside passengers, and a gray head was thrust through the side door, with an emphatic expostulation:

"Driver! I'll report you for— *Ow!*"

A jolt over a loose stone brought the double chin in violent contact with the lower casing of the window, and the gray head disappeared.

"But now—it's the gentle Prince who stands beneath the cloud, I infer?" half-asked the passenger, as the horses calmed down a little. "And you stand up for him in turn? Of course! Does you credit, too. And I look so awfully much like him, you think?"

If so, Prince Amory must have been a handsome young fellow, somewhere along in his third decade, or, possibly, just beyond that mark, for the smiling face into which Cap Hicks now gazed keenly, was one of those that retain few marks of the lapsing years.

Tall, athletic, without being heavily built. Well-proportioned in every respect, and giving indications of more than usual power and activity. Neatly, plainly dressed in a business suit of gray cloth, with a low-crowned derby hat over the short, curling locks of jet.

A full beard and mustaches of the same glossy black, formed a strong, yet not unpleasing contrast with the large, full eyes of dark-blue.

In this contrast alone was he notable in face. His features were clear cut and regular, handsome, after a bold fashion, but not more so than any one of a dozen men in every hundred; a face and type, with that one exception, very common in our land.

"So much like him, pard, that I ax ye once more to drap off this hearse an' turn back," soberly uttered Hicks, one hand softly, almost reverently touching the gray sleeve. "So much like him that, ef you *will* rush to your death, I beg o' you not to make me be the one as drives ye to your fate! Ef you *will* go, I ax ye to walk the rest o' the way. Ef ye *will* go, I ax ye—"

"But as I'm not your Prince Amory, and as I have paid full fare into 'Way-up, you'll hardly chuck me off against my will, Cap?" lightly laughed the passenger.

A puzzled light crept into the crooked eyes.

"You ain't— But I cain't be sech a fool!"

"Don't take oath to it, old fellow," laughed his companion, stifling a little yawn with a slender hand. "It's mighty easy to slip up on what seems a sure thing, nowadays. I never permit myself to be positive on any point. Indeed, if you were to ask me my name, I'd hardly venture to reply without first taking time to reflect."

"It's Prince Amory!" doggedly muttered Hicks.

"Well, if you prefer it that way, I'm not caring," with a smile. "I'm Prince Amory, and I'm going to my death. By the hempen route, I believe you predicted?"

"Ef it wasn't fer the dye on yer ha'r, an' the baird ye've growed sence that black night! But they won't—"

"Oh, now, old fellow, see here!" interposed the passenger, with an injured air. "I'll take the name, since it is a rather respectable sounding one, and since you insist upon it, but when you accuse me of dyeing my hair, I've got to kick! You might as well call me a dude and done with it. I'm not old enough to wear gray on my pow. Consequently my only excuse must be—"

"Kin you say your name ain't Prince Amory?"

"Without even a suspicion of choking. My name is not Prince Amory. My hair is not dyed. I've never done anything to deserve hanging, and though as a rule I'm one of the most peaceable fellows you ever stumbled against in a month's journey, I'm going to do some mighty tall kicking before the citizens at 'Way-up send me up higher."

"They'll do it, dead sure! Fer ef you ain't Prince, you're his very image, all but the color o' yer ha'r an' the baird an'—"

Cap Hicks paused abruptly as his passenger laughed outright. He flushed a trifle, the old suspicion flashing back again. That voice was so wonderfully like the voice he had learned

to love in those days gone by, when Prince Amory lifted him up out of the slough of despond.

"Ef you ain't *him*, then who on airth *be ye*?"

"Call me a sphinx, my good lord!" bowed the other, with perfect gravity. "And if anybody asks you for more information, tell him you haven't got any. If he still insists, swear that I am Nameless, from the shores of No Man's Land. And if he declines to be satisfied, lend him one for me, straight from hip or shoulder, just as the humor best suits you and his position favors."

"That settles it, then," grunted Cap Hicks, with an air of relief as he turned once more to his work, lightly touching up his animals. "I did think you was my ole fri'nd, but he wouldn't putt me off with a bluff o' that sort. You ain't the man I tuck you fer!"

"Now if I can as readily convince the good people at 'Way-up—"

"You cain't. 'Cause why? they won't give ye time fer to argy the case. They'll hev ye kickin' at the end of a rope afore you kin open an' shet yer mouth twicet!"

"An' I'm counted pretty quick with my trap, too!" laughed the man.

"Salt won't save ye ef once either gang gits sight o' ye," gravely added Hicks. "I say to you, what I thought I was sayin' to my old pard: drap off this hearse an' lay low until I come on the back trip. I'll give ye a lift fer the sake o' the man you look so much like—on'y fer that baird an' the black color!"

"Couldn't do it, possibly, old fellow. I'm like a rocket when the powder begins to spit; I've got to go ahead with a rush. Business calls me to 'Way-up. I've started for that delightful burg, and I'll get there if the tugs hold out."

"An' thar you'll stop—on the hillside!"

"If so, set up a board and carve on it the name of your Prince Amory. I'll rest just as easy beneath the sod, and perhaps your friend will rest easier above it for the imposition. And yet—I trust it was not such a disgraceful crime for which I am to suffer vicariously? Not woman-beating, horse-stealing, refusing to drink with a chief?"

With grave concern in his voice, the Nameless bent forward, his big blue eyes gazing into the crooked orbs of the driver, a laughing, mocking devil in their depths.

"You ain't him, an' I was a fool fer takin' up the notion," muttered Hicks, shaking his head and shrinking back a trifle from that gaze. "He wasn't your sort. He was soft and gentle as a woman, though he didn't lack sand, nuther, ef crowded. But he couldn't laugh at death, the way you laugh. Mebbe he'd face it jest as cool, but it would be grave, like, jest as though they was a prayer in his heart."

"A soldier of the cross, and all that, eh? Well," with a little shrug of the broad shoulders, "I don't mind that—in others. And I rather like it in this instance, since my death may be a little more creditable than my life, thus far. Who knows? Maybe the recording angel may give me credit? And Gabriel may mistake—but you were about to tell me what cause your prince gave for being exiled. He was exiled?"

"He was driv' away or murdered, an' I'll hold to that on 'tel—"

"You run across another man with black hair and blue eyes?"

"They swore he stole the money an' run off in the night, but they lied like dogs!" growled Cap Hicks, viciously. "They offer big money to any critter that fetches him back, dead or alive, but they wouldn't dast do that, ef they didn't know he was dead—murdered!"

## CHAPTER II.

## THE TROUBLE AT 'WAY-UP.

THE nameless passenger gazed steadily into the flushed face of the driver, a graver light coming into his own eyes, as though he rather liked and knew how to appreciate this blind, unreasoning fidelity to a friend.

Cap Hicks ran little risk of being "hanged for his beauty," so far as the outer man was concerned. His eyes were wonderfully twisted askew. His nose had once been broken, and now lacked all semblance of a bridge, while the round knob with thin apertures was thickly ornamented with grizzly hairs. His face was seamed and scarred, of an unhealthy, brick-dust color. His scanty crop of hair on head and face was stiff and bristling, once red, but now a "foxy gray."

No sculptor would have chosen him as a model for manly strength or grace. His back was bowed until he almost carried a hump. His arms and legs were too long for his short body, and curiously thin save at their articulations, while his hands and feet were ludicrously large and knobby.

By no means a handsome fellow, this driver, but those who knew him best would tell you that never dog could show a blinder fidelity to a loved master than Cap Hicks to a friend.

Possib'y the Nameless felt something of this, for he said:

"Do you know, old man, I almost begin to regret having opened your eyes? Even under

false pretenses, it must be worth something to have such a dogged friend as you! Suppose we play I'm Prince Amory?"

Again their eyes met, and again that half-fearful, half-longing look came into the crooked pair. But only for a moment. It faded out, and Cap Hicks shook his head slowly, doggedly.

"I was a durned ole fool fur thinkin' it, 'thoug even yit I c'u'd nigh take oath you two is one. But he wouldn't set thar with a laugh in ther two eyes o' him as he denied a fri'nd. He was comp'ny fer the highest an' proudest in all the land, was Prince; but he wasn't never too proud fer ter take the grip o' ole Cap Hicks, the low-down dog as he pulled out o' the mud an' set onto his pins ag'in. He wouldn't even act a lie, let alone tellin' one."

"And you have your doubts about me?" laughed the Nameless.

"Not that way," was the quick response. "I did think ye was lyin' to me at fu'st, for I couldn't seem to fetch it reasonable that they could be another man with a face so cluss like his, an'—"

"All but the dyed hair and full beard!"

"An' it hurt me heap wuss than you'll ever know," pursued Hicks, unheeding the interjection. "It looked like you—he was skeered to trust the ole man. An' me ready to crawl through hell-fire fer him!"

The last words came out like an explosion, with an earnestness such as no hypocrite could have counterfeited. The Nameless evidently realized this, for his tones were more earnest when he spoke again:

"I'd like to learn more about this Prince Amory, not only because of the resemblance, but because it is not every man who can inspire another with such a powerful liking. A rascal can sometimes put such a spell over an honest man, but not often, and though you hinted at your Prince leaving under a cloud—"

"Dwn brake right thar, stranger, ef you please!" growled Cap Hicks, with a reddish glow coming into his crooked eyes. "I never said it, an' them as did lied from A to Ampersand?"

"Bnt he has gone, some way?"

"Gone to heaven, ef they is sech a place! An' I'm only wishin' I may keep rollin' on in decent repair ontill I kin overhaul the way-bill o' them as sent him on the up-route."

There was a subdued but fiery earnestness in this, that spoke more clearly than the wildest denunciations. Insignificant as he looked, Cap Hicks might prove a thorn in the sides of those who had wronged his benefactor.

"That's white and pard-like, old man, but I'm hoping your tongue don't always wag as freely? If there really was foul play with your Prince, a touch of the same might easily lay you up for good and all."

Cap Hicks shook himself together a little, and his weather-beaten countenance resumed its wonted dullness.

"I don't often git that way, but I reckon the face you kerry sot me a little off my jog-trot. It's only when I git good an' stirred up that I shoot off my mouth as you've hearn me to-day. Then—it's only laughin' I git fer my pains. They ain't a man in all 'Way-up that don't b'lieve what them two durned—"

Cap Hicks metaphorically "put on the brake" with an abruptness that called a smile to the lips of his strange passenger.

"That's wise, old man, and I'm proud to see my hint so promptly taken, though I rather think I prefer your view of this Prince affair. The best of men will sometimes go wrong, but more often they are to be pitied than blamed. And sometimes the one doomed to carry the heaviest load of obloquy is but a scapegoat for the real sinners. It may be that this is an instance, and your Prince an innocent sufferer."

"You've hearn somethin' 'bout it, then?" with eagerness.

"Not a word, unless—can it be anything connected with the Black and White trouble at 'Way-up? I caught a stray word or two of that back at Glorious Strike."

"It's jest that trouble," growled Cap Hicks, moodily.

"Then blessed be the chance that gave me you for a driver!" cried the Unknown, his blue eyes glowing, his handsome face lighting up with interest. "You can give me a pointer or two, if you will, and in return I'll promise to lend my aid in clearing up the mystery which surrounds your friend."

Cap Hicks shook his head slowly.

"Twon't do to count much on that. Your face is ag'in ye. You won't hev time to do more'n kick twice after you cross the line at 'Way-up. Ef Black don't ketch ye, White will. You cain't slap 'em both. An' ef they be like tomcats spittin' at each other, the minnit they sight you, that minnit they'll fergit everythin' else but a necktie party, with you at the wrong end o' the rope. The best p'inter I kin give ye is the one I fu'st showed ye: drap down an' hunt kiver ontel I come back this way to-morrow."

"Would love to oblige you, friend, but I can't do it that way," the passenger replied, biting off the tip of a fresh cigar and lighting it. "My baggage is checked for 'Way-up, and to 'Way-up I'm going."

"It'll be 'way up a tree, then!"

"Not without some music first, at all events," was the cool reply. "I'm a regular cherubim when I have my own way, but I draw the line at hanging on another man's account, and I'll go up a tree only after I've exhausted all the arguments I can muster. If you have any particular cronies in 'Way-up, Cap, just give them a hint to stop 'round the corner until the fandango is over, will you?"

"It's *you* fer it, now," muttered Hicks, resignedly. "I've done *my* sheer."

"For which I thank you heartily," earnestly uttered the Nameless, with a gentle tap on the shoulder. "Business of importance calls me to the camp, and even if I wanted to do so, I couldn't back out now. But I don't want. I'm all the more eager to get there, after what you've hinted. I've been lost for a sensation this many a long day, and hanging for another man is something out of the regular rut! Maybe I'll make a botch of it. If I do, draw a line through my place on the way-bill, and paste the leaf down. If I carry it out with grace, write the name of your friend on my head-board, and never hint at the truth as long as the black mark stands against him. Who knows? My death may be his life! Under that cover, he may be able to work out the truth and pay off my score with his!"

Cap Hicks shook his head once more, the puzzled look deepening in his eyes. He no longer suspected this strange passenger of being his benefactor, marvelous though the resemblance had seemed at first, but he could not understand him. Why this interest in Prince Amory? Why this repeated wish to have that name placed over his grave, in case death should follow his visit to 'Way-up? Could it be that—

"You ain't no 'lation to the Prince? You ain't his brother?" he abruptly asked, as the wild fancy occurred to him.

The Nameless laughed softly, shaking his head.

"Neither one or the other, old fellow. I never knew the Prince had a brother."

"Mebbe he didn't," muttered Hicks, his head drooping again. "He never said so. He wasn't one to do much talkin' about hisself, even with his best fri'nds. Nur he wasn't the sort that a critter could take to pumpin'. Not stiff, nur yit haughty, mind ye," with a sudden jealousy that brought a faint smile into the eyes of the other. "Not even with me, he wasn't none o' them. But I knew him, an' that was 'nough fer me. I never axed, nur he never said; but you look so p'izen like him that I think mebbe ye was a brother or some sech."

"Possibly I can serve him or his memory just as well as though the same blood ran in our veins. Tell me about this trouble, if it is no secret."

Cap Hicks laughed shortly, harshly, as he gave a vicious cut at vacancy with his long lash.

"Ef they was to let you live an hour after strikin' 'Way-up you'd hev to hear the story as they tells it. That's the sort o' securt it is!" he snapped, sourly.

"I'd rather listen to your version of it," was the easy response, as the passenger settled himself more comfortably in his seat. "Naturally I am interested in the man who carried the face I now wear. But apart from that I've a fancy for learning what I can about the King Pins of 'Way-up. You spoke of Black and White; are they men, or just colors?"

"They're the shape o' men, anyway, fur's that goes," was the reluctant admission.

"You don't like them; that means they are or were enemies to your Prince Amory," quickly interjected the other. "They are the men who offer a reward for the capture, dead or alive, of your friend?"

"The same critters. "I'll tell you what I know about the dirty business, ef ye like. I don't know all the ins an' outs of it, though, fer they hain't bin but the one side of it told in 'Way-up, an' it all come so quick that even I didn't hev time to find out the truth."

"Mebbe yo know that Prince Amory, then little better'n a slip of a lad, countin' by years as they go, was the fu'st man to strike color whar 'Way-up stan's now."

"You forget that I am an entire stranger," was the quiet response. "Please tell your story just as you would to an angel just dropped from the ethereal space above."

"Waal, he did, anyway. It was stud-hoss luck, as he often told me afterward, fer he was as nigh a tenderfoot as they make 'em nowadays. It was pure luck, though he was huntin' fer jest some sech find. He hedn't learned the fu'st rudiments o' prospectin', as sich, but when he did strike color he hed book knowledge enough to know he'd hit it mighty rich."

"Ye see, he was workin' on his own hook. Nobody as had money to spare was fool enough to throw it away on a greeny like he was then, so he hed to go it blind or turn it up, sence he hedn't ore enough fer to buy a claim as was found a'ready. So, when he made his strike, he kivered his marks as best he know'd how, takin' enough specimens with him to show for themselves, an' lit out fer Denver."

"Thar his good luck went back onto him, fer he fell in with two men as hed the money to de-

velop his claim, and smart enough to know that ef all he said was true they was a mighty good thing to be made out o' the diskivery."

"One would rather call that good luck," amended the stranger.

"Ef they didn't know the durned sharks as well as I knows 'em now!" snapped Cap Hicks, viciously. "He did call it good luck; wuss luck fer him, the pore boy. He felt 'way up in monkey heaven when they come to a'greement to furnish the money ag'in' this find, to share an' share alike in the mine, ef all turned out as it looked from the specimens."

"A fair enough offer, surely."

"Prince thought so, but wait a bit ontel ye see what come of it."

Never mind his precise words. When once under way Cap Hicks could wag a nimble tongue, and on this matter he was particularly fluent. It was not every day that he found one to listen with patience, much less with actual interest, to his narrative.

He went on to tell how the scene of the discovery was visited in company by the future firm, and the prospects thoroughly investigated and tested. Both Ishmael Black and George Washington White were practical miners, and knew a good thing when they saw it. A very short time convinced them that this was a good thing—so good that they resolved to drop all other business until the new discovery was fairly developed, and this they did.

Carefully following the laws of the then Territory, they covered all the ground those laws permitted, and hastened to have their claims duly recorded, before letting the precious secret escape them. After that, the word quickly spread on the wings of the wind, and almost in a night a bustling camp grew up in the hills. Great was the excitement, and for a time hopes ran far above the clouds. Prospects went 'way up above the clouds, and thus the camp received its name.

Of course there was a reaction. Of course many met with blanks, and turned away in search of fresh fields, cursing the new rush. And the three partners came in for a liberal share of those curses, when it turned out that they had covered almost the entire field. 'Way-up was a bonanza, but it was on a limited scale. Apparently there was no distinct vein or ledge of ore. It was more like the old-time gold placers, though this was silver, and in quartz.

Still, there was work enough at good wages. The firm of Black, White & Amory set up a crusher and reduced their own ore. The speculation was a paying one, and if necessary they could have formed a stock company with the perfect assurance of floating all the shares they chose to put upon the market. But "when you get a good thing, hold fast," formed a motto of theirs, and as the months rolled on, the firm grew richer and richer.

But then a streak of bad luck overtook them. One by one their claims gave signs of exhaustion, as many a foiled investor had spitefully predicted, and the news got wind before the partners suspected the truth. Then the elder partners talked of forming a stock company, or of selling outright, but Prince Amory would not agree to this unless the whole truth was told.

"The only fool thing I ever knewed him to do, knowin'ly," frankly commented Cap Hicks.

Soon it was too late for even this resort. Few of the men in the works were deeply in love with the elder members of the firm, and they were not difficult to pump. The truth went abroad, and then trickery was out of the question, in that particular shape, at least.

Not that the claims were entirely exhausted. They were still worth working, but with each month the richness of the ore grew less, while the difficulty and expense of extracting it increased. And worse than all else, there were no signs of matters improving, no indications of a new vein or heavier deposit.

Then—a thunderbolt fell in the midst of 'Way-up.

Prince Amory disappeared. And with him, as the elder members of the firm declared, vanished nearly every dollar of the company's money. And worse still lay behind, for in a shower came in drafts and notes which they swore were rank forgeries, all committed by Prince Amory!

"But they lied, durn an' double-durn 'em!" grated Cap Hicks, spitefully flinging his weight on the brake as the stage rattled down a slope. "It was all a putt-up job! They putt the pore lad out o' the way, an' crammed the money they swore was stole, into tha'r own pockets!"

"Committed murder so that they might rob themselves?" a little incredulously uttered the Nameless.

"To rob *him*, better say!"

"But if the claims had petered out, and—"

"Who says they're petered out? Them two durned sharks, an' the men they've hired to back up tha'r words!"

"But I fail to see their object."

"Ef they'd let ye go down the 'Way-up Mine, mebbe you'd see it!"

"You think, then, that they have struck it again?"

"I ain't sayin' all I think," muttered Cap Hicks, with sudden taciturnity. "I'm only a little tadpole in a puddle whar them two is he-ole bullfrogs; a minner 'ongside two durned alligator gars. I ain't sayin' nothin' I can't prove, but—why hev they knocked off work on that mine?" he suddenly demanded, turning his glittering orbs full upon his companion.

"If Prince Amory ran away with all their money?"

"They've got money enough to keep a hull gang o' heelers loafin' with nothin' better to do then to watch the other gang, anyway."

"A division in camp, is there?" with a sudden increase of interest. "Is that what you meant by the Black and White gangs?"

"Look here, you," deliberately uttered the driver, his face hard-set, his eyes aglow. "I don't know but you're a critter sent fer by one gang or t'other, to holp 'em out. I don't know but what every word I say to you will go straight to either Black or White. Nur I don't give a copper cuss, nuther!"

"I'm bad enough, no doubt, but I'm not quite so low down as that," laughed the stranger, but with a touch of earnestness underlying his lightness that carried conviction with it. "I'm no tool of either Ishmael Black or George Washington White. What you tell me in confidence, goes no further."

"I ain't carin' whether it does or not. Fer all they try to make it out a mighty secret, all 'Way-up is prettily sart'in that they's more wealth in the 'Way-up Mine, then hes bin tuck out of it."

"What are the fellows rowing about, then? Why don't they go to work and reclaim their losses, real or pretended? You say they have suspended work on the mine?"

"They ain't a stroke bin hit below ground sence Prince Amory disapeared," was the slow response. "Why? Ef they know now that a bonanza hes bin struck, they knowed it afore Prince went off—or was sent off. Mebbe that was why he ain't bin seen sence. Mebbe it was him that made the diskivery. Mebbe he told the others, an' mebbe—eh?"

The face of the stranger had suddenly grown grave and thoughtful.

Cap Hicks saw this, and was content to let well enough alone. His meaning was sufficiently clear, and more words could serve no good.

"And the two partners are enemies, you say?"

"They each one keeps a guard o' armed men over the mine entrance. They won't nuther one let the other go down. They each sw'ars the bottom hes drapped out o' the business, but they won't nuther one on 'em sell out, nur yit give the sum axed to buy. Ef that don't smell ratty, then I'm 'way off my nut!"

"It's a curiously mixed up affair, the way you put it," mused the stranger. "If the mine is exhausted, neither would want to buy his partner out, and each would be eager to sell at a reasonable price. If neither will sell, then each must know of another deposit."

"Didn't I say so?"

"But the way they are acting is the surest way to make the other hold out. Are they fools?"

"Or wuss, an' you won't miss it fur! I don't pertend to explain it; I'm tellin' ye jest how matters stan'. My idee is like this: They both hed a hand in puttin' Prince out o' the way. That makes each one skeered o' the other, so they don't dast to come to a open fight, jist yit. Mebbe they've each one made the diskivery, but hope the other only suspects the fact, an' so they're tryin' to freeze each other out."

"How long has this state of affairs lasted?"

"The start was nigh a year ago, but it hain't got so bad ontel the last few weeks. Things is comin' to a head mighty fast, though, an' ef they ain't no back-down, 'Way-up is boun' to see a circus bigger'n she kin hold, now I tell ye!"

"A sort of Kilkenny cat affair," laughed the Nameless.

"Only they won't be so much as a tail left when all's done!" grimly chuckled the driver.

"A year ago, you say? And nothing has been heard from Prince Amory in all that time?"

Cap Hicks shook his head, negatively.

"Then he'll hardly turn up to have a finger in the pie."

"No sech luck. Even I've given over all hopes o' ever seein' him ag'in—cuss them as butchered him!"

"But possibly he did run off—not with the money," hastily added the stranger, as Hicks turned fiercely upon him. "He may have had other reasons. You say he was a tenderfoot, knowing nothing of prospecting. You say that he was a gentleman, well educated. What sent him to such a dog's life? Maybe a sealed page in his past. Maybe one who knew his past came to 'Way-up, and he fled, rather than have the past revived?"

Cap shook his head.

"I thought o' that, but it didn't last long. They was one he left ahind him—a young gal who loved him even as he loved her—which he'd never 'a' left without word or sign like he hes, ef livin'."

"A lady—at 'Way-up?"

"Livin' nigh it, that is. A lady, too, though she's got a mighty pore coot fer a dad; Red

Turner, they calls him, from a bit o' Injun blood he's got in his veins, I reckon."

"Indian, eh? Poor of course? And equally of course, he was proud to see his daughter make such a prosperous match?"

"Ef he did, he tuck mighty good keer to hide his proud," growled the driver. "The durned Injun was too sour fer any use, an' when he was to hum, Prince didn't make many calls at his shanty—not much!"

The stranger hesitated for a moment then said:

"That casts a new light over the matter. Isn't it more reasonable to think this Indian fellow did the deed, than to lay it at the door of the young fellow's partners?"

"That's jest what I'm waitin' to make sure of," grimly responded the driver, with a swift side glance into the handsome countenance. "An' when I know fer dead sart'in, why— But they ain't no time fer more talkin' on that p'int, ef you ain't dead sot on beggin' fer a rope an' a limber bough. Ten minnits more'll kerry us in sight o' 'Way-up, an' then salt won't save ye!"

"You have hinted as much once or twice before, I believe," was the dry retort. "I'm worth a dozen dead men yet!"

"It's your funeral, in course, an' I hain't no right to crowd ye whar you don't want to go, but, all the same, I'll hate mighty to look on, ef only fer the memory that face o' yours brings back. You won't do what I beg of ye, pard?"

"Couldn't, possibly. I never turn back with my work unfinished. I set out to visit 'Way-up, and I'm going there now. If the citizens crowd me too close, there'll be sore toes in the crowd, and not all of them belonging to my feet. I'm mild as milk and sweet as honey, if I'm given room according to my size; but I'm poison when crowded. I don't make a display of my arsenal, but all the same I go well heeled."

"You'll hev need o' all you kin tote, be sure o' that!"

There was silence for a brief space, during which the stage rolled around a sharp spur in the hill, then entered a rather narrow valley, beyond the contracted mouth of which lay the camp of 'Way-up.

Cap Hicks uttered a sharp oath, and mechanically wrenched up his team as he caught sight of an unusual obstacle in the road.

"A toll-gate, is it?" calmly asked the Nameless.

At a point where the road passed between two clumps of trees, interspersed with scattered rocks, the rough trunk of a tree had been swung across the way, seemingly fixed on a pivot of some sort.

And at the rattle of wheels, a number of rough-looking, well-armed men started up on the further side of the barrier. One among them was noticeable for his extreme hight, rising head and shoulders above his fellows, none of whom were dwarfs in altitude.

"Two-story Johnson!" muttered Cap Hicks, hastily, as he let up on the reins and the stage again moved forward. "Sw'ar by the Black gang ef they means to stop us, as it looks like!"

Indeed it did look like it, for as the tall man lifted a hand, the repeaters of his men covered the oncoming stage. Then in a shrill, high-pitched voice that sounded ludicrously from such a giant, he called:

"Down brakes, you Cap! I reckon you've got live freight aboard, an' we'll hev a look at your way-bill afore you go furder!"

### CHAPTER III.

#### ISHMAEL BLACK AND HIS HEELERS.

"I SAY, you driver! I most emphatically protest against such reckless—Good Lord! road-agents, as I'm a Christain!"

The gray head of the inside passenger popped out of the window to utter a dignified remonstrance against such an unceremonious manner of coming to a pause, but popped back again far more rapidly as its owner heard that shrill challenge and caught a glimpse of the warlike array beyond the improvised toll-gate.

"Hold-up an' down-brakes she am, Two-story Johnson!" briskly responded Cap Hicks, then hurriedly adding in a warning whisper: "Take it ca'm an' easy, pard! Squint up yer peepers, an' talk through yer nose ef yer kin. Mebbe they won't look beyond that black h'ar!"

The first portion of his warning was decidedly superfluous. The nameless passenger was most decidedly taking matters easy. He had made no move, given no sign of either surprise or excitement. He sat quietly on the box-seat, swiftly, but closely scrutinizing each face and figure in turn, as though searching for some one long lost, for a dear friend or a bitter enemy, or, possibly, for one with whose personal appearance he was acquainted only through description.

With a swagger that plainly told he "felt his oats," Two-story Johnson swung first one long leg and then the other over the pivoted trunk, his repeater at a trail as he approached the stage. A faint, brief smile flitted across the lips of the passenger on the box-seat as he noted this fact. Clearly the tall man little anticipated resistance to his authority.

"You ain't nigh the fool ye look, Cap," he squeaked, with an approving nod as he drew

near. "You know the ropes, an' act a'cordin', but mebbe some o' your freight ain't so wise. Ef they try kickin'-waal, orders is to sink a mineral shaft clean through tha'r systems. You hear that, critters?" with a backward glance over his shoulder.

"Bet we do, boss!"

"The hull battery 'll bu'st loose at the fu'st wink, sure!"

"My howltwister is tryin' to git off o' her own self, an' if me grip should slip— Jist look at the hot critter, will ye?"

There came a laugh as the speaker had a pretended struggle with his rifle, and as Two-story Johnson turned toward the barricade with a dignified swing of his bony right hand, the Nameless muttered to Hicks:

"The thinnest circus I ever looked at! You can drive over them rough-shod, and never a grain of powder will they burn!"

"Excuse me," grinned Cap, with a comical twist of his crooked eyes that apparently took in everything on all sides at one and the same moment. "I'm a lone orfint, an'— Be durned!"

With a cat-like leap, the Nameless left his seat, alighting beside the tall chief, from whose careless grasp he wrested the repeating-rifle. Without a second glance at the amazed fellow, he strode up to the barricade, paying not the slightest attention to the gaping fellows who stood there, until he swung the pivoted tree-trunk around so as to leave a clear passage once more.

"Pass on, driver. I'll settle this toll business for all!" ordered the Nameless.

Cold, calm, without the slightest trace of excitement or anger his voice rung out, yet with such authority that Cap Hicks mechanically started to obey without thinking, when an angry howl came from the disarmed Two-story Johnson.

"Pile onto him, lads! An' you, Cap Hicks, hold hard! I'll blizzer ye through ef ye turn a spoke!"

"Now I wouldn't, Long-drawn-out!" laughed the Nameless Sport as a light leap carried him across the trail and brought the enemy more in his front. "You mean it, but while you are drawing, I'll be shooting—see?" and a brace of very business-looking revolvers filled his hands.

One gently oscillated in a manner to cover in turn each man of the party by the bar, while the other stared the tall chief full in the face. And the big blue eyes that glanced over the polished tubes, were hardly those of a man who feared to burn powder.

"The boys 'll riddle you ef you dare!" snarled Two-story Johnson.

"The boys are too white to chip in when it's just man to man, and you long enough to cut in two and make a double match. The boys are gentlemen, every one of them!" promptly countered the Nameless.

It was a master-stroke, and even those who were too cowardly to openly take water in the muzzle of a revolver like that which covered them, eagerly caught at the excuse just offered.

"The boss kin han'le him alone, easy enough!"

"The stranger's good as broke in two, right a'ready!"

"We passes! It'd be a insult fer to chip in when they's on'y one to freeze cut, an' he a-buckin' ag'inst the boss o' all bosses!"

"Thanks, gentlemen!" smiled the Unknown, with a short bow, all the time keeping one eye on the enraged giant. "I trust you'll all come to my funeral, if yonder telegraph pole leaves enough of me to serve for one. Driver, the embargo is lifted. Will you drive on?"

"It'll be to your death ef ye tries it on, Cap Hicks!" snarled Two-story Johnson, viciously, one hand stealing closer to the heavy revolver resting against his hip.

"Not at your hands, unless a ghost can kill," sharply interjected the sport, his blue eyes beginning to glitter dangerously. "Empty hands, you idiot! Do you want to commit suicide?"

"Who set you up as a—"

"There's a lady passenger inside, who—"

"Prefers to speak for himself, my good sir!" came a musical, but rather sharp and proud voice as the stage door opened to permit the passage of a lady.

"Excuse me, madam!" bowed the Nameless, his weapons vanishing from view as by magic.

"Your will is law, of course."

"Now I hev got ye, durn ye!" snarled Two-story Johnson, driven half wild by the indignity to which this cool hand had subjected him before his gang.

He whipped forth a huge revolver, but before he could more than clear the barrel from its scabbard, there was a sharp report and a howl of pain involuntarily broke from his lips. The weapon dropped from his tingling fingers. A bright spot on the cylinder told where the deftly directed bullet had struck, with a force that sent a score splinters of lead to puncture the tough skin of the giant.

"Yelp when your master bids, you whelp!" sharply cried the sport, his tool rising until it stared the shrinking desperado in the face. "That's your warning. The next will be your discharge."

Very handsome looked the black-bearded sport just then, and something like admiration filled the proud eyes of the lady passenger as they

turned upon him. Did they fill with something else a moment later? Was it recognition? Was it joy, or was it fear, that drove the color from her statuesque face? Or—was it only imagination?

Swift as the color fled it returned, and Cap Hicks, who alone had noted the change, mentally punched himself for such a foolish thought.

"It's only me as is durned idjot enough fer to 'magine he looks like the boss! Two-story Johnson don't see it. They don't see it, an' they ain't a dog among 'em all but would yelp it out fer the blood-money they'd git by it!"

"Once more I bid you hold!" imperiously cried the woman, gliding between the two men, now facing Two-story Johnson, who was sullenly sucking the blood from his sprinkled fingers. "You will not make my presence an excuse for bloodshed! No gentleman would harm or insult a lady," with a bow that seemed to comprise Johnson as well as his gang. "And while I thank you, sir, for your chivalry," turning graciously to the outside passenger, "I must add that it is wholly uncalled for."

"It is all an outrage! All an abominable shame! I never met with anything so thoroughly atrocious in all my experience! I never did!"

"Thus the second "inside," the owner of the frosty pow, of which mention has been casually made.

A hasty muttering ran through the gang, and as the ever alert Unknown glanced toward them, he saw one and all eagerly gazing up the narrow defile. His eyes followed, to discover a tall, angular figure rapidly striding toward the scene.

Cap Hicks made the discovery at the same moment, and more to put the Nameless on his guard than aught else, he cried out:

"Yender comes Ishmael Black, Esquire! Leave it all to the boss!"

A very grim, hard, unpromising umpire indeed, unless his looks vastly belied him.

Considerably over six feet in height, gaunt and bony, with thin, hatchet-features, long, hooked nose, wide, thin-lipped mouth, drooping at the corners, small eyes, deep-set, and planted close together, black as sloes, but with a peculiar reddish gleam in their depths as the light fell athwart them, with huge, bony hands, and still huger feet.

His inky-black hair fell in straight locks to his shoulders from beneath a wide-brimmed felt hat, but his face was smooth-shorn.

His clothes was made of fine black broadcloth, but they fitted him much as the fabled shirt fits the beanpole. He wore no vest. His shirt was of fine linen, but starchless, as was the wide turn-down collar that encircled his bony neck. About this was a limp 'kerchief, loosely knotted. A broad leather belt encircled his middle, supporting a knife and a brace of heavy revolvers, and also serving to hold up his lower integuments.

In short, just such a man as one instinctively sets down at first glance as coming from Missouri or Kentucky.

As he strode nearer, one could see the twin rills of tobacco-juice marking the corners of his mouth, and the little spatters which discolored his shirt-front.

"What's all this row about? Who's burning powder here?" he demanded, one hand resting on a pistol-butt as his snaky eyes roved rapidly over the assembly.

"Yonder animated hoop-pole swung his revolver about too recklessly for comfort, and I gave him a little hint to mind his manners," the outside passenger calmly responded.

"And who are you?"

"You tell!"

Ishmael Black visibly started, and shrank away slightly, the red light deepening in his eyes, his sallow skin turning a shade yellower.

"I knowed it!" mentally groaned Cap Hicks, averting his head and firmly closing his crooked eyes. "The pesky hot-head wouldn't take a hint, an' now it's good-by John!"

After listening to the tragic story of Prince Amory, it was not difficult for the Unknown to divine the cause of this shrinking. The resemblance must be truly remarkable, for Ishmael Black was anything but an imaginative sort of being. His bony hand gripped the pistol-butt until it seemed as though his fingers would leave their impress in the hard wood. His muscular frame crouched a little, like a wild beast about to leap upon a hated rival; but the stranger did not flinch an atom.

His hands were resting easily in the side-pockets of his coat. His big blue eyes were gazing steadily, calmly into the sallow face of the 'Way-up magnate. There was a cold, almost icy smile playing about his red lips. So unsuspicious did he appear that, acute man of the world though he was, Ishmael Black felt that he held his life entirely at his disposal, and had his first wild suspicions lingered a single breath longer, he would have claimed that life.

And failed to take it!

Those hidden hands were armed with derringers carrying lead enough to slay an elephant, and a man who could look into the eyes of an enemy with such a cool, calm gaze, would

hardly hesitate to shoot when hesitation meant death for himself.

But that wild suspicion was short lived. The fancied resemblance quickly faded. That jetty hair and beard—bah! he was growing foolish to even dream of such rank idiocy!

"Johnson, what seems to be the matter?" demanded Black, turning abruptly away from the stranger.

"An infernal outrage, sir!" exclaimed the male passenger who had emerged from the interior. "These scoundrels have actually dared to obstruct the highway, and to—"

"They are acting by my orders, sir," sharply interposed Black. "If you wish to complain, I'm the man to talk to. What have you to offer?"

"Nothing, save to request you to make our detention as brief as possible, sir," coldly uttered the lady, an imperious wave of her daintily gloved hand silencing her companion. "For, of course, neither of us can possibly be included in your orders, since you do not look like one of those odious brigands, road-agents, robbers, whatever you may call them," with a sudden lapse into womanly soft sawder.

"Of course not," and Ishmael Black bowed with a certain degree of courtliness that apparently belongs to his class by nature, just as the rudely graceful manner of lifting his hat does. "The fair sex is always excepted, but for certain reasons which are too lengthy to detail just at present, no gentleman can enter 'Way-up without first giving his reasons for coming here."

"Our business is identical, sir," with a sudden haughtiness as one hand rested on the arm of her companion. "If he is excluded, so am I."

"Neither may be, if— May I ask the nature of your business?"

"To find a gentleman named Prince Amory."

Ishmael Black started back a pace, his face turning yellower than even nature intended. His small eyes seemed to sink deeper into their sockets, his thin lips grew thinner, and one hand mechanically dropped upon the butt of a pistol.

The keen-eyed stranger smiled softly as he noted this evident shock, and he noiselessly drew a trifle closer, though averting his gaze and seeming wholly occupied in watching the sullen Johnson.

"What do you want of him? What is he to you?" slowly demanded Ishmael Black, speaking like one who finds a difficulty in enunciating his words.

"As I said, that is our business," bowed the lady, coldly. "You did not make a condition of knowing our motives, I believe?"

Outwardly at least, Ishmael Black had recovered his wonted nerve, if, indeed, he had ever lost it. As she spoke, he gazed keenly into the handsome face, over the queenly figure.

Taller than the majority of her sex, with a Juno-like form and a face that would not have shamed a statue of Minerva. Yet not a face that was altogether pleasant to look upon. It was too proud, too cold, too heartless, one would decide. The face of a woman whose only god was self. Of one, even in love, who was cruel; in enmity, remorseless as death.

Her age was not so readily decided. A perfect blonde, with golden hair, dazzling complexion, great blue eyes, full red lips, rounded and rather prominent chin; one of those few women over whose head the years pass with a very light touch. Her perfect freshness would seem to place her barely beyond the 'teens. Her fully matured form spoke of additional years, but how many? That was not so easy to answer.

Her companion also was a notable personage, so far as outward seeming goes. Age had not treated him so gently. His hair was plenty enough, but it was almost snow white. His tall figure was erect as ever, but portly, and growing corpulent. His features were good, but the fine-cut lines were disappearing under the adipose of age, and good living was turning his fair complexion ruddy.

Both were richly dressed, both wearing more jewelry than strictly good taste could excuse.

"Of course," with a low bow, "if you object to telling—"

"I do not, if it at all concerns you to know," with a smile. "I am looking for Prince Amory, because—well, he is my husband!"

"Or you his widow, as I prefer to hope, if all the rumors that reached us is true!" rather testily interjected the other passenger.

"Judge not, my good friend," smiled the woman, turning and playfully tapping the pouting lips with the tip of one finger. "Surely, if I can forgive, you need not hold resentment!"

"I'll forgive the scoundrel when I stand over his grave. That's quite enough, isn't it?"

"From you—perhaps," with a low laugh.

During this little interlude, Ishmael Black was glancing quickly and searchingly from face to face, his darkened brows gradually growing clearer. And he even smiled a little as the lady once more turned toward him.

"We heard of Prince Amory—my scapegrace husband—last, as being at or near this place with the funny name," she said, more gravely. "You can give us some information concerning him, I trust?"

"No good news."

A half-groan, half-snort broke from the lips of Adam Fanshaw.

"I knew it was a vile canard! I knew the foul fiend hadn't done with his villainous tool on earth! But you would come, try as I might to dissuade you! Well—I'll wear out my best boots kicking the vile rascal, anyhow! That will be some scant satisfaction for this horrible journey through these abominable regions!"

"And you, ma'am?" asked Black. "You will not be shocked at hearing of—at learning that—"

"Prince Amory had played some more of his evil pranks?" with a short, hard laugh.

Strong-nerved man though he was, Ishmael Black gave a breath of relief. These people would hardly pry too closely into the facts of that strange disappearance!

"Naturally I hesitated, seeing that you are his wife."

Her regal shoulders shrugged themselves.

"If you know Prince Amory—"

"I do know him! To my sorrow—almost to my ruin!" the magnate of 'Way-up interjected, viciously, his snake-eyes glowing redly. "I know that he has betrayed the confidence I and my partner placed in him. I know that he ran off with every dollar the firm had in its possession, and that even to this day his atrocious forgeries are dropping in upon us, to be paid or to dishonor us in the eyes of the world!"

Adam Fanshaw was about to speak, but Mrs. Prince Amory turned upon him with a swift gesture and warning glance. His lips closed and his broad jaws locked themselves.

Ishmael Black caught this action, and a suspicious gleam came into his eyes. For a moment he gazed first at one and then at the other. He flung out one hand with an impatient gesture, shaking his head and tossing back his straight locks, like one who was trying to cast off a spell. And so he was: the spell of this proud woman's beauty!

"It is only fair to warn you," he said, his voice unusually hard and harsh, even for him. "Prince Amory left a heavy debt behind him. As his relatives, I trust you have come to lift those obligations?"

"He left a third interest in a number of paying mines, as well, I believe?" retorted Adam Fanshaw, despite a warning frown from the lady.

"Never mind going into details," Mrs. Amory said, with decision in voice and face. "Time enough for that when we can do so with more comfort and privacy than now and here. All we want is to get at the actual facts of the case. Then—well, we'll see what we'll see!"

She turned abruptly away from the magnate of 'Way-up, taking the arm of Adam Fanshaw and leading, rather than being led by him, to the stage. She pushed him in first, then entered and closed the door.

"Now comes my turn, I suppose?" drawled a voice close at Ishmael Black's elbow. "Hallo! did I hurt ye?"

The query sounded natural enough, for at the first sound of his voice the gaunt mine-owner started and shrank back, his thin lips curling away from his long yellow teeth, his eyes glowing, his face turning a sickly sallow as his hand instinctively dropped to a pistol-butt.

It was the man without a name that spoke, and now he stood gazing quizzically into the blanched countenance of the mine. But it was not quite the face into which Ishmael Black had stared at their first meeting. There was a change—just what, one can hardly explain in words. The features were the same, but it was as though a thin, transparent vail had been torn from over them.

The stranger could hardly have helped but notice the wonder, almost horror, with which Ishmael Black regarded him, but he made no sign. His bright smile deepened until it became a low, musical laugh, and his tones were more careless than ever as he said:

"If I didn't know better, I'd surely think you'd met a ghost, old fellow! Surely I'm not accountable for all this? You surely are not frightened of me?"

"Who are you? Where did you come from?" hoarsely gasped Black, making a desperate effort to rally.

"I'm nobody, and I hail from nowhere. I'm a lost sheep, seeking a comfortable fold where drink and fodder—principally chuck—are both plenty and cheap. Can you direct me to such a lay-out? If you can favor me with this valuable information, your humble servant will ever pray—and so forth."

"Let me ax him, boss!" impulsively growled Two-story Johnson, who had all this time been nursing his tingling fingers, picking stray bits of lead from under the skin, sending numerous vicious scowls toward the audacious fellow who had so neatly disarmed him. "I'll break him in two pieces 'crost my knee, ef—"

"Johnson, take a reef in that jaw-clapper of yours. Your voice is so abominably harsh, it gives me the headache!" languidly drawled the Nameless Sport, with a careless wave of a hand toward the bloodthirsty desperado.

"Durn ye! I'll settle—say I kin, boss! Jist turn me loose, fer one minnit by the watch, an'

"I'll make a holy show out o' the p'izen critter tell he cain't rest," implored the fellow, sidling closer.

"Your toe's on the dead-line, Long-drawn-out, and one inch nearer without permission will send you where the Old Boy can use you as a poker to stir up the center of his fires, without running any risk of burning his fingers."

No longer drawingl, but sharp and incisive rung out that voice. And to back it up appeared a wide-mouthed derringer, pointed so true that Two-story Johnson fancied he cou'l catch a glimpse of the bullet nestling against the powder!

Small blame to him that he paused, even shrank back. Many a bolder rascal might have done the same, with those blue eyes gazing at him so wickedly.

"I'll git even ef it takes a leg!" he growled, savagely.

"Not if you chip in now, my hearty," laughed the other. "I've got this sort of work down mighty fine, if I am a nobody. I could count your buttons at a hundred paces, and it's queer if I can't split a bullet on that razor-blade nose of yours at this distance. Fall back and try to act white, Johnson. You hear me, Johnson?"

All this time Ishmael Black was staring keenly but furtively into the handsome face over which had come such an extraordinary yet so subtle a change since he first viewed it. He was striving to convince himself that it was but an idle fancy; that his brain, sorely tasked of late, was indulging itself in a vagary as wild as it was ridiculous; but with a scant success.

The voice was the same and so were the eyes, the nose, the general contour of the face, the figure—everything save that full beard and the jetty hair. If they were yellow, to match those blue eyes!

Johnson fell back, scowling more wickedly than ever as he caught a low tittering among his fellows, who apparently hugely enjoyed the discomfiture of their nominal chief.

The Nameless Sport still faced the sullen desperado, with his good derringer in readiness for use in case of need, but he also faced Ishmael Black, a quizzical expression in his glowing eyes as he said:

"Still wool-gathering, dear fellow? Come! you've been racketing about a little too hefty for your own good. You've got 'em, sure! Take a swallow, to taper off on, or you'll have a whole menagerie cutting up didoes all about us. Think of the lady! Think if a rat or a mouse should be among your private collection! Think what would be her—"

"Who are you? What brings you back? Why do you come to—"

With an effort Ishmael Black checked himself, the sound of his own voice—or was it the words that fluttered on his lips?—in a measure restoring his wits. And he was aided in this by a sharp cry that came from the interior of the stage just then.

The door was flung open and Mrs. Amory leaped out, her face pale as death as she came forward, her eyes widely distended as she cried:

"Who are you, with that face?"

The Nameless Sport turned quickly toward her, surprise in every feature, seemingly amazed by her evident agitation, for his response was strangely rude for one who looked so much the gentleman:

"Hallo! what's bit you?"

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### WHITE PROVES BLACKER THAN RED.

NEARLY two miles from the nearest building in 'Way-up, following the flight of a crow, and fully one-half as far again by the winding trail a footman would have to take in getting there through the rugged hills, stood the home of Red Turner and his daughter Kate.

A rude, poverty-stricken dwelling enough, built of loose stones from the exposed ledges around the head of the ravine, with very slight pretensions to either grace, regularity or comfort, as viewed from the outside, and plainly without the use of mason's hammer or trowel. The irregular courses had been laid up dry, although the interstices had since been stuffed full of moss and grass, then daubed over with mud in such a manner as to exclude both cold and wind.

Of just what the roof was composed would not be so easy to decide without a close examination. The principal portion was earth, packed and beaten hard, mingled with long grass and weeds to help hold it intact. A huge, crooked stone chimney formed part of one end of the hut.

No one save the present occupants could have told just when the uncouth building was erected. It was not there when Prince Amory first struck it so rich in the adjoining valley, nor in existence when the first rush came that sent 'Way-up booming in a single night and day. If it had been, some of the later prospectors would have discovered its existence beyond the ghost of a doubt, as they covered every foot of ground for miles around in quest of "indications" and "out-croppings" of either the main or a kindred lode.

But it must have been built soon after, for 'Way-up was still in swaddling clothes when a

party of hunters came back with marvelous tales of a mountain sprite and her disagreeable guardian. And though the sight of a woman was far from being the rare treat it was in the Argonautic days and regions, these rumors were quite sufficient to cause many a footstep to turn in that direction.

Ugly and forbidding enough the little collection of rough stones must have appeared then; now, certain traces had been added, proving the presence of a woman's hand and a woman's tastes.

The stone hut was covered over with clambering vines, even to the lower portion of the chimney, which would persist in letting smoke and flames creep out at its joints and crevices, blasting the tenderer shoots of the mountain vine that encircled it. But that was the sole drawback. The roof bore a green carpet, sprinkled here and there with bits of bright color as the wild flowers bloomed, giving mute evidence of much toil and time expended in keeping them alive and flourishing.

Before the hut grass had been cultivated, cropped and cared for until now it looked almost like a blue-grass lawn. Here and there were little beds of fanciful form, marked by bits of bright stones and fragments of glittering quartz, where wild flowers blossomed with more than native rankness, thanks to care and plenty of water.

That was supplied by the goodly spring that gushed forth from under the rocky cliff, to the rear and right of the building; a spring that formed the head of the creek or little river that lent 'Way-up one-half of its water power, both streams uniting not far beyond the town, to form a roaring, foaming mountain river.

A few rods from the spot where it emerged from beneath the rocks, this spring filled a miniature lake, clear as crystal, cold as though recently iced. The basin was a score feet in diameter, oblong in shape, with a smooth bottom of hard white sand. On the side nearest the hut, the edge was higher, and nearly perpendicular for several feet. And here a neat little platform had been built, for greater convenience in reaching the water. For this little basin supplied not only the household wants, but gave life and vigor to the plants and grass that lent this rude refuge the graces of a home.

It was all the work of pretty Kate Turner, for her father was not one to think of or care for such trifles. And though he could not help admitting that the "looks" of the place were vastly improved, he went no further. Possibly it was the "touch" of red-skin blood in his veins that kept him idle while his daughter dug and delved; an inherited distaste for manual labor, for at times he could be energetic enough, and no game was too distant or too heavy for him to carry it into town when he felt the need of a little spare change.

After all, their wants were few and easily supplied by this means. Game was plenty, and always commanded a fair price in either money or barter, at the mining-camp. Red Turner was Indian enough to be a careful and painstaking hunter, and it was rare indeed that he went out for game but what he procured all he could possibly manage to save.

But few luxuries ever entered the hut, for neither Red nor Kate cared for them. She was naturally retired and quiet in her tastes, and spent little on dress, none on finery. Why should she? Of society, so-called, there was none for her. Those few whom she could have liked, would scorn one in whose veins ran that despised and hated "cross." And those who would have welcomed her, had not the slightest attractions for this mountain flower.

As for Red Turner, he had few of the smaller vices, usually so very pronounced in men of mixed blood. He drank but sparingly, and never yet was known to be under the influence of liquor. He did not gamble, and rarely entered the town after the sun had sunk to rest, so that he seldom associated with the miners proper.

On this day—the same on which Cap Hicks gave a brief mention of her ill-starred romance in which the missing Prince Amory played a prominent part—Kate Turner was sitting alone just within the door of the vine-embowered hut.

One who had only seen her face in those glad days gone by—in the days before her slumbering soul awakened to the knowledge of love—would hardly have recognized the maiden now. Then she was bright, active, with a child-like gayety and restlessness that kept the warm color coming and going in her smooth cheeks, that caused her black eyes to sparkle and glitter like morning dewdrops reflecting the rays of the rising sun. Then her low, charming if untrained voice was rarely still, at times making the rocky cliffs re-echo with a barbarous chant, the meaning of which she scarcely comprehended herself, or else softening into a hymn, or a cradle song, or one of the rude, wailing ballads which were so popular in the Southwest years ago.

But when Prince Amory disappeared, the sad change began.

No more the gay, light-hearted, bird-like song.

No more the wren-like bustling to and fro throughout the day. The bright color slowly faded from her face, the rounded cheeks grew thinner, the brilliant eyes dimmer, her quick step slower and less elastic.

Grimly and in silence Red Turner watched this alteration, and though his conscience may have pricked him occasionally as the change grew more pronounced, he never admitted as much by word or action. His was the heroic cure, and he brought from 'Way-up every injurious rumor or hint that he could gather up, retailing them to his daughter with scrupulous fidelity, adding naught, but taking care to remove no single sting. Her love had been unworthily placed, and she was no daughter of his if she kept on caring for so utterly vile a scoundrel as Prince Amory had proved himself.

In silence she listened and suffered, Indian-like in this, if in nothing else. Not a moan came from her lips while he could hear. But when alone? Ah, then!

If her prayers and pleadings could only have reached the ears of the missing man! If he had been ten-fold as guilty as they tried to paint him, he must have dared all to return to this true love, to lift the burden of suffering and suspense from her bleeding heart.

But he was not guilty. She would never believe that, let them lie and calumniate as they might. He had not fled from punishment. He had been decoyed away by some cunning pretense. He would return to overwhelm the wicked plotters and make his innocence clear to all the world!

But as the days crept on, turning to weeks and months, without the prayed for return, then her fears grew stronger until they became conviction.

"He is dead, father," she said one evening, as Red Turner came back from town with a fresh batch of scandal. "Those demons have murdered him. At least, let him fill his bloody grave in peace."

For once Red Turner was silenced, and rising, passed out of the door to return no more that night; but, like all quiet, stoical men, it was hard to change his mind when once resolved on a certain course of procedure, and some days after that, he let fall the blow he had long held in reserve.

"It's time you knowed the hull truth, child," he said, coldly, but not unkindly; it was his way. "He was wuss then a thief. He was all bad. He meant to treat you wuss then he treated his pardners. He lied when he swore he wanted to make you his wife, fer he was already married, an' his wife is livin' to this day!"

Not a word, not a cry. Only a helpless sinking to the floor, limp and nerveless as a person stricken by lightning. And for many a long day after that Red Turner never lost sight of his cabin, rarely crossed the threshold for more than a minute at a time. Alone he nursed his child back to life, but she never fully recovered her former strength, and never a trace of her olden light-heartedness.

Only once she mentioned the cause of her illness, and then but to declare in weak yet fervent tones her unshaken faith in the truth and innocence of her lover.

"He is dead, or even they would be afraid to so shamefully lie about him. He is dead; let him rest in the grave, father!"

She was sitting there, this day, brooding over the melancholy past. She had abandoned her first wild thoughts of revenge, born of the faint touch of savage blood. She was waiting, as she often told herself; waiting until she could join her murdered lover across the dark river.

Those black days had altered her in mind quite as much as they had in face. That was still lovely, still marvelously attractive, though after a different fashion from her former brilliant beauty. But a skilled physician would have said that her brain was slowly, surely giving way to that terrible strain; that unless there came a change right speedily, to break her constant musing, to stir her into life and activity, she would surely go mad.

Sitting there, Kate saw a short, plump form approaching the hut, along the winding trail that led to 'Way-up. At first vaguely, unconsciously, but then a swift change swept over her pale face, a glow of mingled hatred and repulsion filled her eyes. Her little hands clinched tightly, then moved toward the little revolver which she constantly wore upon her person in a half-hidden pocket made by herself.

"Father!" she cried, in tones sharper than common.

"Yes, Kate," came a prompt response from around the corner of the cabin, where Red Turner was lying, Indian-like, in the sun.

"A snake is coming up the trail. I will not meet him. If he is to enter here, I'm going away!"

"It's Boss White. Stop whar ye be, pritty. I reckon it's me he wants to see, an' we kin talk outside better."

Short, slender, marvelously lithe and quick in his every motion, Red Turner passed away from the cabin to intercept this unwelcome visitor. Dark, smooth-faced, with hawk nose, high cheekbones and straight hair that was black as the

crow's wing, few who met him but believed far more red-skin blood filled his veins than was actually the case.

His father was white, his mother was quarter-bred, whose brilliant beauty had been transmitted to her granddaughter rather than her own child. Red Turner himself could almost have passed for a pure Indian, so far as facial features went, and he was savage enough to care little what others thought of him in that respect.

If he had ever had another name than "Red," no one knew it. Nor was there a man living in or about 'Way-up who could say with anything like certainty from whence father and daughter had come. That Kate had received some schooling, all had to admit. In speech and manner she showed that plainly enough. But who her mother, whence her coming, what her past history, only one man had ever heard; and Prince Amory had never let fall a hint to satisfy the general curiosity.

It was "Boss" White, as Red Turner had surmised, one of the partners to whom 'Way-up owed its existence in the land.

A complete contrast to his senior, Ishmael Black, whose peculiarities of person have already been touched upon.

George Washington White was fat—not portly, but uncompromisingly fat. So fat that were his extremities lopped off close to his trunk, the latter would have made a pretty fair football for giants.

What little hair he had—and this deficiency was fully exposed just now, as he removed his broad straw hat to mop his perspiring head and face—was white as his name, curling in little rings, fine and soft as that of an infant.

His dress was linen down to his feet, and they were incased in soft, easy cloth gaiters. His shirt was open at the throat, with a wide, turn-down collar. His bosom was daintily ruffled, and the buttons were of mounted nuggets, just as they were taken from the soil.

About his mammoth waist was a belt of silk webbing, supporting a brace of ivory-hafted revolvers, although one would hardly take their owner for a "fire-eater."

"Confound you, Turner!" he ranted, in an oily, wheezing voice as he stood in the scanty shelter afforded by a stunted tree alongside the trail. "How dare you look so cool and comfortable, while I'm hot-hot? That don't begin to express it! If I was to drop into the center of the Arctic Ocean, I'd scald every seal and whale in it to death! Ugh! For an iceberg to hug!"

"The sun is gettin' re'ther warm, that's a fact."

"And that's so decidedly cool that I begin to feel refreshed already!" laughed the fat man, good-naturedly. "If you'll just boost me from behind a bit, maybe I can manage to reach the house."

"It's hotter in thar, jedge," with a side glance toward the cabin, in the door of which Kate still sat listlessly. "I reckon you'll be a heap mo' comf'table out whar the breeze kin strike ye freer."

Just the suspicion of a frown swept athwart the face, but it vanished in an instant. The oily voice took on a graver tone as its owner spoke:

"Miss Turner is at home, then? And she has not forgotten—nor forgiven?"

"She's a little whimsy, like most gals, jedge, but she's all I've got now, an' nat'ally I hev to humor her some," was the rather stiff response. "Ef you *must* talk in the house, I kin send her away."

"Not on my account," was the hasty response. "Indeed, I begin to feel cooler. There is quite a breeze stirring, and if this tree would only cast a little bigger shade—"

"They's shade a-plenty over yan'a bit, jedge. You kin rest thar. An' talk—ef talk it's what you come this fur for."

"And to see you, old fellow," blandly uttered the fat partner, with a bow that was quite lost on Turner, since he was already moving away at a sharp angle toward a clump of trees and undergrowth. "You don't drop in half so often, of late. One scarcely sees anything of you now-a-days. Ever since that infernal Prince—"

"I wouldn't fetch him up ag'in, jedge, ef I was you," shortly interjected Turner, with a half-savage glance over his shoulder.

"Got to do it," panted the fat man, his voice just a thought more hard. "Come for that purpose. Time we *did* talk it over, I think."

"It cain't do no good," was the sullen response as Red Turner dropped down at the edge of a comfortable bit of shade, his Indian blood preferring at least a touch of the hot sun. "It was a wuss cussed day that brung him to this valley. It turns my mouth bitter to talk of him, I tell ye!"

"Mere imagination, my dear fellow," blandly panted White, fanning himself as he sat on the ground with his broad back supported by the slanting trunk of a tree.

"Is it 'magination that's changed my gal like this?" savagely retorted the other. "Is it 'magination that's killin' her by inches?"

"You mistake me, dear fellow," drawled White, his fat lids almost hiding his little blue

eyes. "I meant the taste in your mouth. You're bilious. You don't let the sugar in your glass dissolve. You expose yourself too much to the hot sun, and what you eat ferments. You're turning sour, man."

"I don't reckon it was to say jest this that you tramped all this way through the hot sun?"

"Turner, what did you do with Prince Amory?" suddenly, sharply demanded the mine-owner bending forward, his little eyes fully open now trying to read below the surface, to detect a lie before it could be uttered.

But he had his trouble for nothing. The only change that came into that bronzed face was a scowl of vicious hatred. And the answer was plain as it was prompt.

"Killed the cussed hound!"

"You are quite sure you killed him?"

"Look here," rudely muttered the other, rising on his elbow and staring fixedly into the fat face. "What's got into you? What ye tryin' to git at? You *know* I killed him!"

"I know you *said* so," was the response, more smoothly than before. "I know that I offered you the price—"

"An' you know that I wouldn't take it, don't you?" with a short, hard, contemptuous laugh.

"Which you refused to touch," calmly continued the mine-owner as though no interruption had taken place. "I know that I have been puzzling my brain over that refusal ever since. Why did you refuse it?"

"Because I'd bin paid."

"Not by Black?" with a sudden start. "The devil! He didn't hire you to do that job, did he? Why didn't you give me a hint?"

"No, he didn't. But I was paid. Double paid when I knowed the pizen snake was dead! Paid by his death. You kin understand that?"

Evidently the fat man could not, even now. With him gold was everything, the one and only reward for evil deeds.

"But you agreed to kill him for so much money, and—"

"No, I didn't. I said I'd putt the snake out o' the way, but I never said I'd do it fer money. I killed him beca'se he meant harm to my little gal. I killed him beca'se he lied to her, when he had a wife livin' an' breathin' that same minnit! I killed him to save her—an' killin' him, I'm beginnin' to fear I've murdered *her* as well!"

It was indeed a rare thing for Red Turner to show even the faintest trace of emotion, but he did now, as he glanced in the direction of his house. Though his view was cut off by the trees, he could see Kate sitting in the door, pale and thin, daily growing paler and thinner, although even now she was but the shadow of her former self. And as he brushed the sudden dimness from his eyes, he plucked the long knife from his belt, plunging the steel again and again to the hilt in the ground, twisting and turning the blade as though it were buried in the heart of his dead enemy.

"I killed him, I tell ye!" he growled savagely. "I shot him through the brain, an' to make sure, I carved his heart with my knife. I washed my han's in the hot blood as it run out, an' I stood over him until I saw the blue glaze come over his eyeballs. Then I pitched him into the river, whar the rocks stuck up thickest—you know the place! A log couldn't pass 'em without comin' through in matches!"

Despite his heartless, callous nature, White shivered as he looked and listened to this savage outburst. He shrunk back a little from the viciously-handled blade, and one hand involuntarily moved to a pistol.

Red Turner saw this, and a sudden change came over him. With a harsh laugh he replaced his weapon and resumed his former careless, indolent position, saying:

"All I'm sorry fer, is that it cain't be done over ag'in. I'd draw it out ten thousand times as long!"

"And I'm sorry that it was done at all," muttered White.

Red Turner sat bolt upright, his black eyes turning red, his low tones full of half-wonder, half-menace, as he demanded:

"What you mean by that, jedge? The truth, ef ye ever spoke it!"

"That I wish Prince Amory was alive and well again," was the quiet, distinct response.

"You wish it—you?" grated Turner, with almost savage intensity. "Wasn't it you that come to me an' offered me gold to put the man out o' your way? Wasn't it you that fu'st whispered hints ag'in him? Wasn't it you that showed me the papers provin' Prince Amory hed a livin', lawful wife? Wasn't it you that swore he was only foolin' my gal?"

"And nothing but the truth, my dear fellow," purred the fat man, with a deprecatory gesture of one plump hand. "I don't say that the fellow didn't deserve the fate that overtook him, but I do say that, so far as I am personally concerned, I'd be better off if he had storned, and another partner had vanished—not G. W. White either!"

"Yit he robbed you both? Mebbe that is what you mean by bein' better off?" hesitated Red Turner.

A faint sound bubbled up in that fat throat, but if it was a laugh it was smothered in its

birth. Not that White feared to trust this self-confessed murderer, but he was naturally secretive, and never more so than when he declared his candor the most earnestly.

"Hardly that, for if Black had sloped he'd have taken my clothes as well as wealth."

"He suffered loss, too."

"Just as much as I did, of course; since we are partners," laughed the fat man; then, as was his shrewd custom, swiftly plunging into his real mission: "Turner, you must take your daughter away for a change of scene and associations. She's letting this trouble kill her. If you don't shake her up a little, she'll die, or go crazy!"

"What kin I do more then I hev done?"

"Take her away. Take her to the States, across the ocean, anywhere and everywhere! Take her where she'll have to forget, for a time, at least. Break up her thoughts, and you'll save her. Stay here, and—I tell you she'll go mad in less than another month!"

"It's easy to say go, but how kin I? Whar's the money to pay fer all this? An' we'd be clean lost, she an' me, ef we *hed* the money!"

"I owe you that sum, yet. I'll double it twice over if you have the nerve to do another bit of work something similar," whispered White, leaning forward, his little eyes glittering evilly.

Red Turner met that gaze steadily. His thin lips parted once or twice to speak, closing as often, as though he found a difficulty in choosing his words. And White added, almost coaxingly:

"It won't be nigh so ticklish a job as the other, for if you choose your time well, and take ordinary precautions, it will all be laid to the rumpus that's now stirring. Say you'll do it, and name your own figures, anywhere in reason. I'll pay you in advance, if you prefer."

"I reckon you'd better talk plainer, jedge," coldly uttered the other man. "Ef I hit your meanin' rightly, you want me to murder a man?"

"Remove him, you mean; the meaning is the same, but that sounds a little better," laughed the fat man, a trifle nervously.

"It's the work that counts, not the term. Who is it? Why?"

"You know what an infernal row we've got into, don't you?"

Red Turner nodded, gravely. Too gravely to suit his temper. He would rather have free speech. These silent men are so awkward to deal with! They require such plain speech, and do so little to help one over the nasty places!

"Well, it's growing worse instead of better, with each day that passes. Black is so infernally bull-headed that he he'll listen to no decent compromise. He'll neither sell nor buy."

"I heard that he named a price, yest'day," quietly said Turner.

"But what an abominable figure! What an outrageous demand! A sum altogether beyond my means of paying! The scoundrel!" exploded White.

"Mebbe he'll buy, then?"

The fat man laughed angrily.

"Eager to—for a figure just one fifth what he asks for his own interest! It's an insult beyond bearing!"

"Then ef neither cain't buy the other out, an' ye won't neither o' ye sell, why not come together, shake han's, bury the past an' work the claims fer all they're wu'th, like ye did afore?" sensibly asked Red.

"It's gone too far for that," growled White, viciously. "I'd do for him, or he for me, before our grip grew cold. And that's what I come to you for, Turner. You'll not go back on an old friend?"

"I kin tell better when I know jest what that ole fri'nd wants," was the dry retort. "I'm a man that's mighty slow to pick out puzzles, jedge. Ef you'll come out flat-footed an' say jest what it is you want me to do, an' why, I kin talk easier."

Even with that encouragement, White hesitated, but not for long. With a quick glance around them, as though to guard against the possibility of eavesdroppers, he leaned forward and whispered:

"Serve Ishmael Black as you served Prince Amory! Make as clean work in this case as you did in that, and then name your own price!"

"You mean fer me to murder him?" coldly asked Turner.

"That, if you will have it so! What do you say?"

"That you've come to the wrong man, Mister White," replied Turner, rising to his feet with something like dignity in voice and manner.

"I'm poor, but I don't want money that bad!"

"You wasn't so particular with Prince Amory!" snarled White.

"I killed him beca'se he tried to wrong Kate, not fer gold. You know that, Mister White."

"I know that you did kill him, though!" with a savage curl of his lips. "What if I tell what I know? What if I denounce you as a murderer? Don't try to put on airs with me, Red Turner, or maybe—"

"Tell all you know, fer what I keer," was the cold interruption. "I never hid the truth beca'se I was skeered to face the consequences."

## The Nameless Sport.

I hid it to spar' my gal, but she's fadin' away as it is. In killin' him I've killed her heart. Her body 'll soon foller after. Then—if you don't let it out afore—I'll tell the hull world how I punished the dirty snake!"

No bluster, no gestures, just a cold, passionless statement of the simple truth, and angry as he was, White saw that to threaten this iron-nerved man could only work himself injury.

Still, he could not bring himself to see the nice distinction. He knew that a man had been killed by the being standing before him. He could not fully believe that what he did for vengeance, might not be duplicated for gold.

"Think it over when you're cooler, man," he said, also rising to his feet, speaking more earnestly, more coaxingly than before. "Think of what the gold will do for you! Think of your daughter, and all that may be done for her with plenty of money! Why, man! it may mean her life! It may save her from madness! Think of that!"

"I'm thinkin' o' what she'd say if she saw the color o' the gold you want me to take, jedge," was the composed retort. "I know what she would say; that better madness a thousand times over, then a quiet mind bought with the price of a man's life!"

"Then you absolutely refuse? Take time to think before—"

"It don't take time, jedge. I say right now, I won't do it. An' ef you're a wise man, you won't ax me ag'in to—By the furies!"

From the direction of the cabin came wild cries, mingled with the rapid reports of firearms! And above all rose the voice of Kate Turner, calling on her parent for help!"

And with a snarl of fury, Red Turner dashed toward the hut.

### CHAPTER V.

#### THE NAMELESS SPORT, FROM NOWHERE.

A BLUNT, even rude question, but the woman who had introduced herself as Mrs. Prince Amory, gave no signs of taking offense, unless it was by the little shiver with which she shrunk back a trifle from the full light of those big blue eyes. Or was it from the voice?

"Beg pardon, ma'am," quickly added the outside passenger, his voice growing softer, his handsome face flushing just a trifle as he bowed slightly. "I really thought it was another of these gents jumping on my back. By which you may see I've precious little ear for music, or—"

"Who are you with that face?"

Little music in the voice that uttered the words! Strained, hoarse, barely recognizable. And the face with almost as great a change. Pale to a corpse-like shade. Looking old and haggard. With doubt, fear and hatred struggling for the supremacy.

"Oh, it's my face that troubles you, as well as this highly respectable gentleman, is it?" with a short laugh. "Making a guy of myself, am I? Roaming the country with—let's see!"

His free hand drew a small mirror from his pocket, and coolly as though in the peaceful seclusion of his own chamber, the stranger took a leisurely survey of the reflected face. The slightly solicitous expression faded away, giving place to one of quiet content, of calm approval.

"No smut on the nose. No symptom of smallpox. No skull and cross-bones printed thereon in indelible ink, that I can see. No mark of Cain, such as some men—and occasionally women—bear on their forehead, even in these prosaic days!"

The big blue eyes flashed over the mirror first at Ishmael Black, then at Mr. Prince Amory.

The man was staring fixedly at him, as though striving to read what lay below the surface, but that peculiar look of horror had vanished almost entirely. There was anxiety, uneasiness, indecision in the piercing black eyes. The lank jaws were working steadily, the thin lips at intervals parting enough to eject a stream of dark juice, but that glittering, snaky stare never for a moment wavered.

The woman was far less steady, and she visibly shrunk before that thinly veiled insinuation, and the extent of her agitation may be inferred from her quickly brushing one bejeweled hand across her brow.

Just the ghost of a smile flitted across the face of the outside passenger as he noted this action, but it was instantly hidden by the slightly shifted mirror, as he muttered:

"Take it altogether, and it's a face that might pass muster in a crowd. Not so exquisitely lovely—though I've run up against many a harder phiz on a dark night—but angelic. A face that wouldn't look so bad with a storm-ring painted around it. Or anchored in the center of nothingness by a pair of goose wings. Or—eh? Beg your pardon, my dear ma'am. You were about to observe?"

"Who are you? What is your name?"

"My name is Norval. On the Grampian hills—but unluckily these ain't them, and so can't you sling an easier one at me, ma'am?"

"You are Prince Amory!" the woman cried, her voice hard and grating, a hectic flush coming into her pale cheeks.

"Only a prince?" echoed the outside passenger, with a note of disappointment in his voice. "Can't you make it a king, or an emperor?"

"You are Prince Amory! And I thought you dead! Curse you!"

With a swift motion the woman plucked a slender blade from her corsage and sprung upon the stranger, striking quick and viciously at his broad bosom. Only to have her round, strong wrist fall into his palm. Only to be held helpless as those blue eyes met hers with a mocking devil dancing in their depths. And to be greeted with a low, amused laugh, followed by the half-pitying, half-scornful words:

"And you would rob me of even that poor title? Without granting me time enough to fully grow accustomed to it? Or to draw even one draft on the princely treasury? Don't you call that rather crowding the procession, my dear madam?"

Although no one could see that he was exercising any great degree of power, the dagger fell from her fingers to the ground, and as he released her hand, it dropped helplessly to her side.

"You demon!" she gasped, hoarsely, shrinking back but still facing him. "I'll succeed even yet! You shall not always escape me thus!"

The outside passenger quickly straightened up with the glittering weapon in his hand, but now all trace of levity was gone, and in its place came a mock seriousness.

"I reckon I've made a botch of it, as usual. Did I understand you to say that your name was Mrs. Prince Amory, ma'am?"

"Dare you deny it, you scoundrel?"

"Then I can't be Prince Amory without being your husband? That *does* settle it!" and with a quick step forward he reversed the dagger and placed the haft in her hand, gently tapping his own bosom as he added: "You're a woman, and so not extra on taking aim, I reckon, but maybe you can hit the mark at such close range. I've got a heart as big as a bushel basket, and it's awful tender: so tender that an eyelet through one edge I'll serve just as well as a center shot, I'll go bail."

Mrs. Amory clutched the weapon, but shrunk back rather than made an effort to accomplish the work she had so desperately begun. Her eyes were fixed on that cold, handsome face, wonder and bewilderment taking the place of baffled rage and hatred.

Were the scales dropping from her eyes? Was she going mad now, or was she just recovering from an insane delusion?

A minute since, she could have taken oath that this man was Prince Amory, and as such she had sought his life, feeling that one of them must die. But now—was it only imagination?

If so, Ishmael Black was equally under the influence. He, too, had felt positive that Prince Amory stood before them, alive and terribly unghostly. And he, too, was rapidly changing his opinion, mentally telling himself that he was an infernal idiot for making such a mistake.

And he was hardly a man to be taken in by a voluntary change of expression. He had never for an instant removed his gaze from that handsome face, and he could take oath that not a muscle was worked, not a line altered. Yet the fancied likeness was gone—had faded away even as he gazed! *This* was not the face of Prince Amory, though still closely resembling it in outline and feature when each was taken separately. Not when taken as a whole.

"You won't do it?" added the stranger after a brief pause, a half reproachful echo in his voice. "You will make me speak out plain? All right. I can't take the name, with the encumbrance. I'm not worthy the honor, you see—ahem!"

"You're *not* Prince Amory!" harshly interposed Black.

"Ah, thanks, my dear fellow!" ejaculated the stranger, whirling about and grasping the mine-owner by the hand, and shaking it vigorously. "A friend in need, is a friend indeed, they say, and now I know it! You wouldn't mind taking oath—making affidavit to that fact, would you? In case of necessity, of course? In case she—eh?"

He paused abruptly as he saw Mrs. Prince Amory whirl about and beat a hasty retreat to the stage, through the open door of which Adam Fanshaw had been anxiously watching the peculiar little drama.

"Good Lord! if she'd only held her grip!" muttered the Unknown, with a nervous little shiver as he shrugged his shapely shoulders. "I run my head right bang into the trap, in my eagerness to find out who and what I really am! Not that I cast any reflections, mind you! Not a bit of it, my dear fellow! Only that I feel my general unworthiness. Only that I know how little I deserve such an armful of delight and matrimonial felicity. *My* wife? *Her* husband? I'd swell up and burst with pure ecstasy before she could hug me twice!"

"You're not Prince Amory, though you look enough like him to be a twin brother," coldly added Ishmael Black, just as though no interruption had taken place. "Then who are you?"

"Can't you tell?" anxiously asked the other.

"Who are you? What is your name? What business brings you to 'Way-up?" sternly demanded the mine-owner.

Another swift change, and the outside passenger was once more the gay, careless, nimble-tongued adventurer.

"You want my pedigree? All right, though I can't take oath to its correctness, for I was precious young when I first came into this bleak and heartless world!"

"I want the truth, and nothing else. If I catch you in a lie, so much the worse for you. Even yet, I'm not so positive! If you *are* that infernal scoundrel, impudence nor salt will save you?"

"Meaning Prince Amory? What has he done to arouse such a commotion among the select? Run off with your—your daughter?" after a brief pause, as though altering the title to correspond more nearly with the age of the man addressed.

"Done enough to doom him to the rope if he ever comes within reach of 'Way-up. If you *are* he—curse that baffling face of yours! One instant I am ready to take oath you are Prince Amory, only to call myself an idiot with the next breath! How do you change it so quick?"

"A sort of now-you-see-it and now-you-don't-see-it, eh?" laughed the outside passenger easily. "It's all in your eye, man! I never forget a face, and I'm positive you and I never met in the flesh before this memorable day. As for names—what does the Immortal William say? What's in a name? Look in the dictionary—or is it spelling book? Never mind. Look where it is, and you'll find *Allium cepa*. Smell anything loud about that? Slips off the tongue like thick cream, don't it? Spell it over, and you find a bad onion! A dewdrop to the eye, but a finger to the nose, literally translated."

"What's all this got to do with answering my questions?" sharply demanded Ishmael Black, frowning darkly.

"Blessed if I know," was the candid reply. "You've got me so completely befuddled with your ayes and noes that I hate to decide just which end of me is up, at the present speaking. I don't *think* I'm standing on my head, but I wouldn't take oath to that effect."

There was an audible snicker from among the interested spectators, who clearly found something comic in that speech. Johnson was not one of that number. He was still rankling with insult and injury, and as he noted the angry frown on the dark face of his chief, he made one more effort to get even.

"Gi' me leave, boss, and they won't be any doubt long! I'll make a dent in the ground with that wooden-head ontel—"

"Johnson, button up your lip!" sharply cried the outside passenger, and his blue eyes flashed a quick glance toward the angry giant. "You are growing a nuisance, Johnson. I'll have to sit down on you presently, unless you mend your manners. Down charge, you cur!"

"After me, Johnson," coldly uttered Black, quieting his enraged henchman with a single wave of his hand. "And you, sir, will show your wit by answering my questions."

"As to my pedigree? All right; open your ears. I was sired by Ignotus and dammed by Nemo; he by Nobody out of I'll-never-tell; she by Maybe out of Perhaps, all imported from No Man's Land, in the year of I-don't-know-when. My birthplace was Guess-where, and after winning my maiden race at Never-mind-where, for the Enigma Stakes, I was named You-tell-what-if-you-can-for-durned-if-I-don't-forget!"

Glibly the stranger rattled off this rimearole, with perfect gravity and such rapidity that he was almost through before Ishmael Black realized the nature of the important communication. A flush came into his sallow face, and an angry glitter to his snake eyes.

"I don't reckon you know who you are talking to, my fine fellow."

"A man; and I'm another," was the prompt retort. "Maybe not quite so good-looking, but just as white, and to the full as freeborn."

"You are going to 'Way-up, I believe? To stop there, I mean?"

"That's the present schedule. Yes."

With a short, hard, disagreeable laugh, Ishmael Black turned toward the armed men who stood near the once barricade.

"Who am I, lads?"

"Boss Black!"

"What am I? In 'Way-up, I mean."

"King-pin—cock-o'-the-walk!"

"If I were to tell you that this glib-tongued fellow is a detective and spy, sent for by the White gang to—"

"You'd be telling them a lie," coolly interjected the Unknown.

"I'm not so sure of that," retorted Black, once more facing the outside passenger. "If not something of the sort, why are you so close-mouthed about your name and business at 'Way-up?"

"And my tongue been running on like a clapper worked by steam?"

"Giving plenty of sound, but precious little information," said Black, with a hard, grim smile.

"Perhaps I could have said more, if I could

admit your right to play the inquisitor," laughed the stranger, with a slight sneer.

"Might is right in these parts, as perhaps you'll discover before you pass many days in 'Way-up. If I question you, I've got the power to enforce an answer, or—"

"Go on, I beseech you, my dear fellow," drawled the Nameless.

"I think you comprehend my meaning without further words."

"I do. And now *you* listen," was the quick, steady speech. "I'm a white man, traveling on my own business. I'm not going around looking for a row, with a chip on my shoulder. I'll stick to business, if I'm permitted, and try not to tread on anybody's toes. But—with a big B—I'll not crawl under the table nor jump through the window when gamecock or dung-hill crows in my face. If I'm not hunting a fight, I carry my tools with me, and I know how to use them if I have to."

"All of which means?" coldly asked Black.

"That it's fight or shake, just as you elect, my dear fellow," was the cool retort. "In candor, I can't say that you'd make a very handsome corpse for a public funeral, but if you insist upon it, I'll do my level best to give you a good send-off."

"You forget that these men—"

"Are much too white to chip in a private game. You forget them when you even hint at their throwing dirt."

Another neat stroke, and Ishmael Black secretly realized this as his keen ears caught a low murmur that might have been an open cheer, coming from behind his back.

He knew that he was not loved by even those who served him for his money. He knew that it was only his money, only the wages he paid them, that kept them from going bodily over to the enemy, his partner. And knowing how frail was even that claim, he did not choose to press his threats further in that direction.

"Would string you up to the nearest tree," he coldly added, as though these were the words he originally intended to utter. "Not because they are in my employ alone, but because they are sworn to maintain law and order in and about 'Way-up while matters remain so unsettled. And, if you expect to stop over in town, must take one side or the other."

"You mean I've got to be pure white or jet black?"

"That you are our friend, or our enemy—yes."

"But if I prefer to straddle the fence?" laughed the Nameless Sport. "If I insist on remaining neutral, can't I do it?"

"Why should you wish that?"

"Board the cards, is it? All right. Because I'll have a double chance to make a stake worth the trouble. Because I can plunder one side or the other, just as chance favors and the cards happen to run my way. *Sabe, senor?*"

"You're a card sharp, then?"

"I'm everything and nothing. I'm a free lance, and I make a raid wherever the pasture is richest and the cattle fattest. For cattle read players—cards understood."

"If your fingers are half as nimble as your tongue, I pity the poor devils you rope into a game," grimly smiled Ishmael Black, despite himself beginning to feel a strong interest in this human enigma.

"Oh, I generally leave them their natural integuments," blandly explained the sport.

"All the same, you've got to take one side or the other in this little dispute. You must proclaim yourself either friend or enemy, for there's no such fence as you yearn for in all 'Way-up."

"If I must, I must, of course," a little more seriously uttered the stranger. "But before I decide finally, pray give me a little light. Which party has the biggest heap of justice on their side?"

"The one we represent, of course," a little sharply repiled Black.

"Score one for the other side!" muttered the Nameless, in a theatrical aside. "I always did have a leaning toward the unlawful! And which gang can show down the most filthy lucre?"

"What has that got to do with your decision?" irritably.

"Much, perhaps. You were about to say?"

"I own the biggest half of 'Way-up, and before another week I'll own the whole of it, if you must know!" snapped Black.

"Then, good-by, old fellow. You can call me White, if you please—White to the backbone—White first, last, all the time!" was the brisk reply, as the Nameless grasped the mine-owner's hand and wrung it cordially for an instant. "I fell over head and ears in love with you, dear man, but you've pronounced our eternal divorce—or as near eternal as your pocket holds out! Good-by! If it isn't a secret, what barbershop do you patronize? If I could beg, borrow or steal a lock of your hair, it might make the parting less excruciating and—eh?"

With a muttered oath, Ishmael Black tore his hand free, turning toward the stage as he growled out to his tall henchman:

"Johnson, I'll leave this fellow for you to look after."

"I kin square yards with the p'izen cuss, boss?" was the eager question, as the giant strode rapidly forward, his gaunt face filled with malicious delight. "I kin break him in two?"

"Keep him from entering town until I send you further orders. He has chosen the White side, and must suffer the penalty. And," turning to the Nameless Sport, he added, "you will act wisely if you—"

But that worthy was paying no attention just then. As Two-story Johnson attempted to grapple with him, a nimble twist foiled him, and a heavy kick in the middle doubled the giant up with a hollow groan.

"Johnson, you shade the sun! Come down to my level, and I'll argue the case with you!"

#### CHAPTER VI.

##### AN UTTER WRECK.

THE appearance of George Washington White, one of the most bitter of her missing lover's truders, broke upon the dull apathy which had become almost second nature to Kate Turner, but this did not last long.

She watched her father hasten to meet the mine owner, saw them turn away and soon vanish from her view. Something like a sigh of relief escaped her lips as she watched. She would not be compelled to flee from the house in order to avoid meeting this assassin—with his tongue, if not his hand—and all exertion was growing very hard to her of late days.

"A double murder," she murmured, hardly conscious of her own words, as she resumed her former position on the threshold, gazing out upon vacancy. "They killed him. They killed me with the same cruel blow! But his suffering was soonest over, thank God! How long, oh Lord! how long?"

"Judge" White had spoken truthfully in one respect at least. This overtasked brain was perilously near giving way, and unless her bodily powers should fade the more quickly Kate Turner would surely go mad if nothing came to arouse her from that horrible brooding.

Beyond a doubt Red Turner loved his child, but it was after his own rude, untaught fashion. A stoic himself, he felt that she must suffer and fight it out herself. The deeper the wound, the less probing. It would be a hard fight, he told himself, but she was *his* child, and she would gain the mastery in the end.

With a man like himself this reasoning would have been correct enough, but with poor Kate it promised to end in the grave or mental blackness.

She had been so supremely happy in those days! The world was so bright, so full of joy! Only to live and breathe was delightful; but to love and be loved in turn.

"This is purgatory, but that was heaven!" the poor child murmured, scalding tears trickling down her wan cheeks, a mist blurring her great dark eyes as her wandering fancies passed beyond that awful black chasm, and for a brief space brought tender memories instead of heart-sickening woes. "He was so gallant, so bright, so true—my hero! It was there—against the light, looking a sun-god!" with a yearning look toward the rocky point that jutted out high over the little valley, and on which Prince Amory stood when she first caught a glimpse of him, more than a year ago.

A faint, gasping sound escaped her lips, her thin hands clasped tightly as she leaned forward, her eyeballs almost starting from their sockets, for there, on the point, just where she first beheld Prince Amory—there, at this self-same hour, on just such another bright day—she caught sight of a human figure!

The wild fancy flashed across her poor brain that this was her true love, come back to heal her poor heart, and to confound his bitter calumniators. If her poor eyes were not so dim—and she brushed her trembling hand across them to clear away the mist.

The vision was gone!

Again and again the poor child cleared her eyes, but each time to fail in again detecting the shape, and then she bowed her head and closed her eyes, weeping silently. It had been but a vision. Perhaps a token?

"It was his spirit, come to bid me farewell!" she murmured, only to lift her head with a start, and an abrupt change. "Not that—not that!" her black eyes glowing as her face was uplifted toward the sky. "Bidding me come—bidding me be ready to join him in the land of spirits! I am ready, my love, my all! Ready and longing—oh, so eager to be gone! So willing to leave this cruel world! If I only could!"

And yet, not all a vision. Though hardly what could with propriety be called a man, in the strict sense of that word, the figure which for the moment caught the eyes of the poor, half-crazed girl in the door of the little cabin, was very mortal indeed. Nor was there anything supernatural in the manner of its vanishment, when a closer look is taken.

Like all mining-towns, 'Way-up was not without its "traveling sign," its typical "bummer," its "dead-beat," and general, "ne'er-do-well!" Of course there was more than one poor devil in town who came under one or the other of these classifications, but there was one

in particular, who was a shining light among his fellows; one who more nearly approached the ideal "perfect wreck."

That was "Jim-jam Jones." So everybody called him. Jones was the only name he would give, and the rest came to him naturally when his peculiar weakness was borne in mind. Peculiar, not in being the only one in camp who had a personal experience with "snakes in his boots," or hand-to-hand struggles with "the man with the poker." Wherever you find bad whisky in abundance, such unfortunates are to be met with, more or less frequently as the drought waxes or wanes; but as a rule they present no features of novelty or interest. It is a steady debauch until the climax comes, to end in death, in prostration, or in a brief fight with the airy demons, according to the temperament or physical powers of the afflicted one.

But Jim-jam Jones was an exception. He swore that he was born drunk, and that he had had "horrors" before a drop of liquor ever crossed his lips. It might be so. There was none in 'Way-up who could either confirm or deny this assertion. He was drunk when he first entered the town, and if he had ever sobered up since, there was no record of the fact.

That fact alone would hardly have attracted a second thought, for habitual drunkards were no novelty in 'Way-up, but there was something more original in this Jones. There was no certainty when one of his "spells" would overtake him. It might be just as he was laughing and chatting with a group of fellows, light and graceful, full of fun and frolic, apparently the soundest of the sound. There was no warning alteration in face or voice, nothing to show the fit was impending, nor just what shape his fancies might assume when "under the power."

Sometimes the "spell" would last only a few moments, when the afflicted wretch would be upon his "pins" again, bright and cheerful as though nothing out of the way had happened. Then, again, he might turn fairly insane, howling and writhing, fighting and struggling like a veritable bedlamite. Or he might take to "running a muck" through the streets, blind as a mad-dog in the last stages of hydrocephalus. He might run on and on, the mad race ending only when his bodily powers were utterly exhausted, maybe miles and miles away from the spot where the "spell" first overtook him, there to lay like a dead man until reaction came.

And so it had been on this occasion. Nearly a week before, Jim-jam Jones had fled from 'Way-up with frightful yells, brandishing his weapons and causing the laughing citizens to hurriedly tumble over each other in clearing the way. On and on the rum maniac fled, to drop down in the heart of the hills, there to suffer as only such miserable wretches can suffer.

The fit had been an unusually prolonged and severe one, and when Jones awoke to consciousness again, he was a truly pitiable looking object, weak and almost famished for food and water.

He crawled on until he found the last, and that lent him strength to make his way back toward 'Way-up. But somehow his brain did not clear up as quickly as usual after one of these spells. He knew that he was going "home," but that was about all. He had a vague sense of being dogged by grim and threatening shadows—only shadows, for when he turned savagely upon them with bared knife or drawn revolver, they vanished like fog-wreaths before a puff of wind.

If they would only stay banished! But ever behind him he could feel them mocking at and threatening him with all imaginable horrors.

He had heard other hard drinkers whisper of such things, but until now he had never had such an experience, and he found it all the more annoying because he had laughed at them, had sneeringly set himself high above the common herd of drunkards.

"I'm never bothered that way," he would say, with a languid contempt. "That's the penalty you ordinary rum-swimmers must pay. My disease is a gentlemanly one!"

And now, an utter wreck, nearly starved, ragged and foul, staggering from weakness, and but the ghost of his former self, this poor wretch actually felt that he was disgracing himself by having such low fancies. It was actually like being a common sot!

He was desperately fighting against these plebeian phantoms, when his aimless footsteps were arrested on the very verge of the point, the afternoon sun at his back casting a ruddy halo about his tall form.

It was Jim-jam Jones that Kate Turner saw, and while she was tremblingly clearing her eyes, a shrinking recoil from the dizzy abyss led to the sudden disappearance of the wretch. His foot caught in a crevice, and he rolled back behind a little clump of bushes.

The shock partially cleared his brain, and he realized where he was. He crawled away on his hands and knees until at a safe distance from the dizzy height, pausing now and then to grind his teeth and shake his clinched fist at the dancing, gibbering shadows that still haunted him so persistently.

"I'll fool ye, yet, you beggars!" he panted, rising to his feet and staggering down the rocky slope by means of which he knew the valley could be reached the soonest. "A bite of solid food—a sup of strong coffee'll settle you, curse ye all!"

So he believed, and it was this hope that lent him strength to reach the valley and suddenly appear before the sorrowfully brooding maiden, whose face was uplifted at the sound of his unsteady footsteps.

She shrank back with a faint cry of fear, as her gaze first rested on the human wreck. And, truly, Jim-jam Jones was quite enough to scare one with less shaken powers than that poor girl.

"I'm starving, lady," he panted, his once musical voice harsh and strained as he cast a shivering glance over his shoulders at the mad phantoms grinning and menacing him. "A bite of bread—a sup of coffee—for the love of Heaven!"

Woman-like, Kate forgot her own woes in the misery of another, and her fears were forgotten that instant.

"Come in, you poor fellow!" she exclaimed, rising and pushing aside the chair she had occupied, taking him by the hand to lend his uncertain steps the aid they evidently needed. "Starving—in the midst of plenty—how awful that sounds!"

Jim-jam Jones staggered across the threshold, his eyes again directed over his shoulder, a note of triumph in his husky tones:

"They hang back—they're afraid to follow into your presence, sweet lady! I'll cheat 'em yet! To try such vulgar tricks on *me*! To pretend I'm an ordinary, every-day drunkard! Bah!"

He dropped into the vacated chair, trembling like a leaf, but with a pitiful pretense at scorn in his face and voice as he glared outside at the dancing phantoms of his disordered imagination.

Kate shrank away, releasing his hand, frightened for the moment into the belief that she was harboring a maniac, or perchance a fugitive from justice, on whose tracks the bloodhounds of the law were pressing hard. But only for a moment. Then, great as was the alteration this last "spell" had wrought in his face and figure, she recognized Jones.

Red Turner had once pointed him out to her when they two had visited 'Way-up, and gave her a brief sketch of his peculiarities. She had met him several times since that day, and now she felt only sympathy for the sorely-afflicted wretch.

"They shall not harm you, poor man," she said, hurriedly, forcing herself to gently pat his dirty, trembling hand. "They cannot reach you while you are sheltered beneath this roof. There is a magic circle before the door over which no evil or uncanny thing can pass."

"And an angel of light within, whose glorious eyes are still more potent!" impulsively cried Jim-jam Jones, swiftly lifting the little hand to his bearded lips with an almost reverential air.

"Only a poor, sorrowing girl, who is glad to be of service to you, or any other unfortunate, rather," hastily murmured Kate, withdrawing her hand and turning away to place food upon the table and to pour out some strong if cold coffee.

"You can say that, without fear of open contradiction, Miss Turner, but there are angels in the flesh, just as sure as there are angels in the heavens above," earnestly uttered the broken-down wretch.

For a moment he looked more like his usual self; and drunkard, bummer and dead-beat though he was, and had been for many a long year, Jones was really far above the ordinary in outward appearance.

Time was when he really must have been an extraordinarily handsome man. Tall, shapely, perfectly proportioned for both strength and activity, his figure was still erect and comely. A perfect blonde in type, with hair like spun gold, slightly waving above the high, broad and full temples; with full blue eyes, even now but slightly marked with the reddened lines of the drunkard; with clear-cut features, a little more haggard than usual; with a long, forked beard, yellow as corn-silk, fine and soft when not soiled and tangled as now.

A wreck, mentally and physically; but once a man for love of whom many a proud woman might easily have abandoned all else, and still accounted herself the gainer.

But it was only for a moment. Then that wild, hunted look came back into his face and eyes. Once more he glared savagely out at the door, one hand clutching at his revolver, his lips parting until his strong, even teeth were slightly revealed.

"Keep back, you low wretches!" he muttered huskily. "I'm no vulgar dog that ye can frighten by such ridiculous antics! Go back to your usual game—I'm meat for your masters! You won't—"

"If you will please sit up to the table, Mr. Jones," timidly interposed Kate. "Shall I shut the door on—"

He started and shrank from her gentle touch,

the wild light deepening in his eyes as though for the moment he classed her with the grim shadows that so sorely troubled his brain. Then, with a short, forced laugh, he said:

"Excuse me, Miss Turner; I was lost in a reverie. Past troubles—and for a moment I really took you for—for a devil, instead of an angel of light! I beg pardon! You see, I've suffered so—Look!" and he sprung to his feet, grasping her arm with a force that caused her to shrink and utter a low cry of pain. "Look! the devils have come down the chimney! There's one peering out of the cup! There's another sprinkling poison on the meat! There's another—Ha! ye merciless demons!" he shrieked, a sudden frenzy seizing upon him, brain and body.

He flung poor Kate behind him into the corner as he uttered that maniacal scream, and drew his revolver, sending shot after shot at the imaginary demons that haunted him, yelling and cursing, striking out viciously with his knife-armed left hand, foaming at the mouth, the very personification of raging madness.

Poor Kate shrieked aloud and called on her father for help, so terrified that she could not or did not think to flee out of the open door. She could only watch that frightful figure as it fought with the grisly phantoms of a diseased imagination.

Fortunately Red Turner was not long in reaching the house. Still more fortunate was it that Jim-jam Jones saw his mocking enemies so thickly about the food on which he had counted to foil them, else a knife-stroke or a bullet might have claimed her as a sacrifice.

Into the hut leaped Red Turner with a howling cry of rage, dropping the revolver he had drawn in coming, fearing to burn powder in that semi-darkness while his eyes were in a measure blinded by the sharp contrast to the bright sunlight without. His first bound carried him against the maniac, and a single twist sent the drunkard headlong out of the open door.

Always a marvel of strength, when his size was considered, the man's powers were doubled now that he felt his child was in peril. A single effort was enough, and cat-like, Red Turner followed after the fellow, dropping with knees dug into his back, with one hand clutching Jones by the throat, while the other flashed forth a long blade and held it quivering above his head as he glanced back toward the door, calling out in a strained tone:

"Kate—gal! Speak! cry out of you're still livin'! It's death fer the cussed cur anyway, but ef he's butchered you, I'll skin him by inches an' roast him alive!"

"Father—don't!" gasped the poor girl, staggering to the door, but unable to step down to the ground, the shock had been so severe.

"You ain't hurt? The cuss didn't hurt ye a bit? The truth, gal, is what I want!" a little more naturally uttered Red, slightly relaxing that terrible grip on the throat of the helpless drunkard. "It's sure death fer him, anyway, but ef he didn't hurt ye much, it'll come quicker. Speak out, little one—talk quick an' straight!"

"I am well—he didn't harm me at all—poor fellow!" Kate cried, conquering her numbness and moving forward. "It wasn't at me, father, but at the ghosts!"

"Jim-jam Jones, as I'm a sinner!" panted White, only at this moment coming upon the scene, panting and puffing like a stranded grampus.

"That durned critter?" ejaculated Red Turner, slipping off his insensible captive and rolling him over, face uppermost. "Sure enough it is! One o' his pesky fits, I reckon, unless—you're sure you ain't hurt, child?"

"Not in the least," bravely replied Kate, though even as she spoke she caught her breath with a gasp of pain, so sore were the bruises she had received by that savage throw against the wall. "Pray let him go, father! He didn't mean to do any harm. I was very foolish to scream out as I did, but—"

"With him a-yelpin' an' a-shootin' like fun!" grimly muttered Turner, scowling at the helpless drunkard. Wonder he didn't take you fer one o' his pizen spooks, an' let a hole through you big enough fer a—Durn the whelp!" with a vicious gleam in his jetty eyes as they turned upon Jones once more. "He's run the thing into the ground, he has! Time he was choked off fer good—an' I'll do it, sence they won't nobody else take the trouble. Go back to the house, Kate!"

"He was starving, he told me, father," faltered Kate, for almost the first time in her life hesitating to immediately obey her parent. "You can see that by his face—poor wretch!"

"Shouldn't wonder if that was it, after all!" chuckled White as he peered down into the haggard face. "I haven't seen him about town for a week or more—by Jove! not since his last tantrum! If the spell has lasted all this time, I don't wonder at his feeling just a bit hungry—poor devil!"

"See!" cried Kate, dropping to her knees beside the drunkard, and then looking appealingly up into the stern, dark countenance of her parent. "See! his eyelids are quivering! He is recovering his senses! Thank kind Heaven! you have not his life upon your hands, father!"

"Ef I hed, it wouldn't be no more'n the durned houn' desarves!" was the sullen retort. "Think what mought 'a' happened to you, while the cussed imp was cavitatin' aroun' like mad! Think o' that, gal!"

"But he has not harmed me, even by accident, father. See! I am all right—only a little nervous—"

"Naturally enough, too," bowed White, but smothering the rest of his speech as Kate visibly shrank away from him, her pale face turning even paler, a glow of indignation dislike filling her black eyes.

But she said nothing to him. She still thought mainly of the poor devil against whom her parent was so bitter.

"He spoke so softly, so humbly, when he begged for food and coffee, father! He was so grateful when I promised him some! He called me an angel of light—"

"Which shows Jones was clear-brained enough to speak the truth, at least," interposed White, with an oily smile and profound bow.

"You set yourself up as a judge of truth—you?" cried Kate; her cheeks flushing, her eyes sparkling, her voice filled with intense scorn.

"You—the base slanderer of the dead—of the murdered? Go, you base imitation of manhood! Begone, or I'll forget that I am a woman, and send your black soul to its Maker without time for repentance!"

She was upon her feet now, with a revolver in her hand, the hammer drawn back and her finger on the trigger, the silver "drop" covering the red face of the mine-owner. He trembled—actually trembled!

"Kate—gal—you fergit yourself!" sharply cried Turner.

The weapon was dropped to the ground, fortunately without exploding from the shock, and the girl covered her face with her hands. She trembled violently, and her voice was unsteady as she murmured:

"I have—I do! Another moment, and I would have sent him after the innocent man he murdered so—No!" uncovering her face, her eyes flashing anew as she uplifted one hand toward the sky. "Not follow! He has gone above, while you—"

There was no need for her to conclude the sentence. Callous as he was, White had no difficulty in divining her meaning. He flushed and paled alternately, then muttered sourly:

"Madness is catching, I reckon! Turner, when you can spare me a few minutes more, I'd like to say something. Just now, I reckon I'd better hunt a more agreeable position!"

"They ain't no need, jedge," was the cold reply. "Kate is goin' to the house. I mean it, child," he added, in a softer tone as he turned to the girl. "You kin go, without worryin' 'bout this pore coot. I won't rub him out, though that'd be the kindest thing fer him that a man could do, I reckon."

"He's starving, father," murmured Kate, with a look of pity in her dark eyes as a faint moan came from the lips of the reviving drunkard. "Let me give him something to eat and drink before you send him off. Please, father!"

"You kin do that much, ef he kin keep the grub down," was the reluctant response, but with an immediate brightening up. "Mebbe it'll be best. Mebbe it'll help to sober him up; fer when he does go away from here, he's got to be soberer then he's bin fer this many a moon!"

Kate did not hear the concluding words, for she was hurrying back to the house after food and coffee. Red Turner drew White to one side, and watched what followed with stern, unreadable features.

"That was a rather wild shot the girl made, Turner," hesitatingly muttered White, with an uneasy glance into that hard-set face. "And yet it cut alarmingly near the mark, too, if she meant Prince Amory!"

"You let the gal alone, jedge. She's hed enough bother, I reckon," was the cold, almost surly reply.

"But what put that notion into her head?" persisted White, unable to drop the disagreeable subject all at once. "Surely, you haven't been so idiotic as to let drop even a hint of—"

"You drop it, durn ye, I say!" and Red Turner flashed a wicked look into the fat face. "I don't want to quarrel with you. I want to git along quiet an' peaceable, ef I kin. But drop it now an' forever. Ef ye don't—"

"All right," muttered White, sourly. "It's your pie, anyway."

In silence they watched the return of Kate, with food and a cup of black coffee. They saw her help the drunkard to sit up, holding the cup to his lips, apparently whispering her forgiveness or else bidding him have no fear of worse treatment.

"He's coming around all right, after all!" muttered White, with a trace of surprise in his voice. "How he stands it is more than I can understand. He's gone through with enough to kill a score common men."

"He'll hev to go through a little more afore he says good-by to this ranch, durn him!" grated

Red Turner, with a flash of the eye that meant mischief.

"You won't kill or cripple the poor devil?" drawled White, very much as though he didn't care which might happen.

"I would, only fer her," with a glance toward Kate, who just then looked toward his position. "She'd take it too hard. She don't hold a grudge like some people."

White shrugged his shoulders and pursed up his lips, as though he felt like contradicting this assertion.

Turner saw it and laughed, not clearly or mirthfully, but half-savagely.

"I don't blame her fer that, thinkin' as she does about that—"

He cut his sentence short, moving toward the spot where Jim-jam Jones was sitting, looking much more natural after his bite and sup. It was remarkable how he managed to keep it upon his stomach, after all he had gone through, but such was the case. In good sooth he was no ordinary sot!

"You kin go to the house, Kate, an' shet the do' ahind ye," coldly uttered Turner. "I reckon I kin 'tend to this critter now."

Kate rose and just touched his arm, an appealing light in her dark eyes that spoke quite as plainly as though her lips formed the plea.

"You've got my word, child, an' I won't go back onto it. I won't kill nur cripple this critter, but I'm goin' to sober him up the quickest an' cleanest way I know how. Shell I show ye the way to the house?"

Kate knew that when Red Turner spoke in that coldly polite way, it would be worse than useless to attempt to change his resolution, and she fled from the scene without another word, closing the door behind her, hiding her face in her hands, stopping her ears to shut out—what?

"Git up, Mister Jones, ef you please," said Turner, his sinewy fingers closing on the arm of the drunkard. "You've played the tom-fool in this valley fer the last time, I reckon. Not that I'll kill ye. Ye ain't wu'th so much trouble. But I'll wash the devil out o' ye so clean that he'll never come back to ye ag'in in this locate, anyhow!"

While speaking, Turner was forcing the drunkard toward the little lake of water, cold from the spring of which mention has previously been made. He paused at the little platform, adding:

"I'm goin' to baptize ye, Jones, an' baptize ye good! Ef you kick too hard ag'in the pricks, I'll tie ye up hand an' huff. Ef ye act decent, mebbe ye'll git off all the easier. Which shell it be?"

"I'm sorry I frightened Miss Turner, but—"

"But you done it, Jones. Sorry don't count when the mischief's done. Time fer sorry is afore the trouble, ef it's the pure white article. Kate don't hold malice. She begged fer your life when I was a heap hotter than I be now. She saved your life, but even she cain't keep me from washin' the devil out o' ye—or tryin' monstrous hard!"

"I know I deserve punishment," faltered the poor wretch, now really frightened, more acutely, perhaps, because Turner was so cold and passionless, "but I was crazy—mad with the horrors!"

"You'll be heap madder ef ever you come strayin' on this range ag'in, Jones," grimly uttered Turner, tightening his grip. "Git ready! Button up your lip, or the water'll stop it fer ye! So!"

Just how it was performed, even White, who stood watching the scene with covert amusement, could not explain, but in a twinkling of an eye, Jim-jam Jones was held head under the water, with Red Turner grasping his ankles, standing on the edge of the little platform and deliberately churning the drunkard up and down, every few moments lifting his head and face clear of the water, to permit him to catch his breath for a fresh immersion!

For good ten minutes this lasted, then Turner balanced his victim across the landing, assisting him to regain his feet, brushing the hair from his eyes, quietly reading him a serious lecture.

"I don't reckon you'll easy fergit what I've bin tellin' ye, Jones," he concluded with a grim smile. "Take your drunks ef ye cain't git along without 'em. But don't come on this range to hev the wind-up, unless ye want to pull out o' the business fer good an' all. I've watered ye this time. The next time I'll plant ye. Now git!"

And without a word of either thanks or cursing, Jim-jam Jones "got."

## CHAPTER VII.

"YOU CAN'T WIN IF YOU DON'T BET."

JOHNSON did come down, with far more celerity than grace to the eye or comfort to himself. His head and feet came almost together as his middle shot back and came to the ground with "a sullen thud!"

True, it was only a foot that had caused his downfall, but it was a foot applied so dexterously, and with such hearty good will, that it might

as well have been a pile-driver, so far as results were concerned.

A flash of the foot, and then the Nameless Sport leaped back in the direction of the stage, actually coming in contact with Ishmael Black, who was checked by that explosive howl and groan combined. And then—it looked as though the action was purely to save himself from falling—the outside passenger grasped hold of the 'Way-up magnate, one hand on his shoulder, the other on his breast, with a finger crooked through a buttonhole.

"I call on you for protection, Mr. Black!" the Unknown cried, in hurried tones that contrasted sharply with the keen, cool glance which he cast over the startled men by the barricade. "I beg of you to quiet that ferocious limber-jack of yours, or this valley will swim in gore! If I can't run, I'll fight, but I'd rather dodge than do either—and you're my bulwarks, dear Black! They can't reach me without first sinking a tunnel through *you*!"

Black's heelers looked on in open mouth amazement. What was reputation worth, if a fire-eater was to stand and take all this like a lamb? Was the chief of 'Way-up under a spell? Had this enigmatical stranger bewitched him? Was it a touch of "hoodoo business?"

Not the least of the wonderers, Cap Hicks leaned over the rail and stared at the curious scene, but he was more fortunate than the other outsiders, for a broad grin still further wrinkled his weather-beaten visage as he solved the puzzle.

In the hand that crooked a finger through the buttonhole nearest over the heart of Ishmael Black, lay a wide-muzzled derringer, and the Nameless Sport was breathing just above his breath:

"It's business, Black, and your first try for a kick over the traces will send you to glory—or the other place! You *sabe*?"

"I'll tear your heart out!" growled Black, ghastly with rage, yet using the same guarded tones lest his men should see and comprehend the full extent of his humiliation.

"Some other time, dear fellow," and the Nameless Sport actually smiled in his face, sweetly as a brother whose affection was too overpowering for audible expression. "It's my age, and I'm waiting for you to say. If you chip, I'm going for all you're worth. Lively! If the lads grow impatient—well, it's *your* funeral!"

"What do you want, curse ye?"

"Your word to let me hoe this row myself, my own way. After, I'm open to give you all the show you want to get even, but now—how is it? If you pass your word, it's all I ask. You're too white to jump the contract without decent warning, I know."

Black was no coward, physically speaking, although he had not shone very brilliantly thus far in this little drama, thanks to the repeated surprises which had dropped upon him. But neither was he a fool. He saw and felt that business-looking derringer. He knew that a messenger from such lips meant swift death when a master dispatched it, and he began to realize that this Nameless Sport was a master in more senses than one.

And, strange as the assertion may sound at first, he was really grateful for the consideration shown him. There would have been less risk for the Unknown in openly holding him "lined," for then even his most zealous adherent would hardly risk a snapshot to free his chief. And Ishmael Black was very proud, after a certain fashion. He loved life, but he loved his dear-won reputation even more. To be humiliated in his own eyes was bad enough, but to be held up as a laughing-stock before the men he hired would be a thousand-fold worse.

And, too, those concluding words were admirably chosen. A loophole for an honorable escape, instead of a shameful surrender!

"I pass my word as a gentleman, sir, if you promise to see me later," he quickly responded, that sickly pallor already dying out of his face.

"When, where, and how you prefer, my dear fellow," whispered the Nameless Sport, slipping his finger from the buttonhole and stepping aside a couple of paces, lifting his voice and crying:

"That's hearty, and I know these gentlemen won't kick against your decision, honorable alike to your head and heart!"

"Durned ef the boss hain't tuck water!" coarsely cried out one of the armed men, with a loud laugh.

"Would it shock your sensibilities beyond recovery if I were to gently insinuate that you are an infernal liar?" blandly uttered the Nameless Sport, a revolver singling out and covering the speaker with a dexterity that could only come of long practice and natural skill.

With marvelous unanimity his felows scattered, leaving the impulsive speaker alone—hardly in his glory. He was armed, but his tools were not ready for instant use. He could only cower and shrink away, one open palm rising in depreciation as he stammered:

"Take it all back, boss! I never meant nothin'—don't shoot!"

"At you? Thanks, but I never eat carrion," laughed the Nameless Sport.

"But I bury it when it becomes too offensive," sharply cried Ishmael Black, striding forward a pace or two, his bony finger quivering with poorly suppressed rage as it covered the shrinking fellow. "I've had my doubts about you for some time past, Dan Veal, and I'm glad you've shown your true colors at last. Call at my office and get the wages due you this evening. Then—see that you keep out of my sight!"

"As for the rest of you, one word. I have left this gentleman to settle with Johnson. See that you don't interfere between them, unless you are tired of my service."

He turned to the Nameless Sport, bowing stiffly as he said:

"Is that satisfactory to you, sir?"

"It was a miserably mistaken wretch who selected your name, Black," my dear," laughed the outside passenger, grasping his hand with hearty good-will, if appearances go for aught. "A hog couldn't ask for more, and I'm satisfied from cellar to attic and back again! Only—how will yonder forked angle-worm take it? Looks like he was in a mighty bad way, already!"

All this passed with rapidity, though considerable space has been taken up in giving the details. Two-story Johnson still lay as he had fallen, doubled up in an awkward shape, but beginning to catch his breath with gasps and groans and grunts of pain.

As he spoke, the Nameless Sport moved toward him, a single touch of his white hand being sufficient to lift the giant to a sitting posture, from whence he glared dizzily up at his conqueror. And then his right hand fumbled at his weapons, a broken oath hissing through his teeth.

"Johnson, don't you be a bigger idiot than Nature intended, or she may have revenge in borrying you again," warningly laughed the Nameless Sport, deftly tapping the clumsy hand with the toe of his boot. "Suppose she was to give you the ears, as well as the nature of a John-donkey? Or, suppose she was to change you into a white gentleman, and then forget to give you a proper knock-down to yourself? Johnson, lend me your nose-wipe while I weep over the frightful picture thus conjured up! Oh, Johnson—"

"I'll cut your heart out!" panted the giant, rolling over out of reach of that ready foot, and staggering to his feet, flashing forth an ugly-looking blade.

"Will you, really, Johnson?" laughed the Nameless Sport, leaping to close quarters, but with his hands empty. "Shall I borrow you a knife with which to do the carving? I'm sadly afraid yours is lost."

The giant struck out viciously, but a nimble twist evaded his blow, and then—how was it done? The glittering weapon was in the hand of the Nameless Sport, flashing rapidly back and forth in front of its owner's face, so close that his eyes instinctively closed to save themselves! Only for an instant—then the knife was flung high over the tree-tops to vanish from view.

"Ain't he a daisy—right from the middle o' the bunch!" cried one of the men by the barricade, while Cap Hicks fairly crowed with pure delight.

"Johnson, you're drunk—too drunk to be on duty," cried the Nameless Sport, his hands on his hips, his head on one side as he stood with feet wide apart before the giant, apparently inviting another attack by his defenseless attitude. "You want a little sleep, and a big bath—especially the bath! At least you must put your head to soak, Johnson, else you'll have a rush of brains—"

The giant stared stupidly at his mocker, the spasmodic working of the Adam's apple in his throat betraying his qualmishness, but he was too thoroughly confused to realize how completely he was being played with by this impudent stranger. He only heard the jeering laughter of the men whom he nominally commanded, and felt that he must do something to redeem himself if he hoped to retain that command. He saw the mocker within reach of his long arms and muscular hands, seemingly unarmed, apparently wholly unprepared for defense, and with a howling cry, he reached out to grasp and crush the laughing devil to the earth beneath him.

Instead of succeeding, his bony fingers closed on empty air, and then—was it a battering-ram?

The Nameless Sport leaped lightly back, then forward with his foot shooting out in advance, and Two-story Johnson for the second time fell a helpless victim, doubled up more completely than before, quivering all over, "knocked out of time" without the slight satisfaction of having even placed the weight of a finger on his adversary.

"Johnson, lay there until you get a little sense," laughed the victor, nimbly regaining his perpendicular. "Not much—that figure-head is far too handsome to have burst under an undue pressure! Good-day, Johnson, and pleasant dreams be thine!"

"And you, gentlemen," he added, turning to the amused men by the barricade, his voice growing much more business-like than while

dealing with the gangling giant. "A word before we part. There lies your champion. Lift him up tenderly, and treat him with care. When he comes to his senses—such as they are—tell him that I am not lost, but simply gone on ahead to prepare for his coming. Tell him he'll find me in 'Way-up, with the latch-string out, and a pot of mush over the fire. Whisper in his ear that if he wants to get even with the Nameless Sport, to choose his game and name his figures, from penny-ante to cut-throat. Blame the expense, as long as we can have fun!"

"Which I reckon he's done hed a-plenty, boss!" chuckled one of the worthies addressed.

"Ef he hain't, he's heap bigger hog than his nat'ral grunt says!"

"And if Johnson should turn a little bashful, don't let that stand in his way," coolly added the adventurer. "Let him bring his friends along with him, and I'll try to provide victuals enough for the gang. I'm the freest-handed fellow you ever run across, if I do say it myself. I've often gone to bed hungry after stuffing my guests too full for utterance, as my dry lot on the hillside can bear witness. But it's like an omnibus: always room for another, and the choicest situations still unoccupied!"

"It won't fit this critter, nohow!"

"An' I'd heap ruther stan' up, anyhow," laughed another.

"But Johnson 'll come, an' we kin climb a tree fer to see the fun!"

"And welcome, my gallant lads!" laughed the Nameless Sport, with a parting wave of his hand as he turned toward the stage. "Shall we have the honor of your company to town, my dear fellow?" he asked, blandly, as he gained the side of Ishmael Black.

"I am going back, yes," was the terse reply.

"Inside or out? If you prefer my seat on the box, don't be a bit bashful, my dear sir. I'm a fish that can swim in almost any kind of water. Even hot—if I have to!" he added in a lower tone as he cast a swift glance through the open window, where he could catch a partial glimpse of the fair face of Mrs. Prince Amory.

Despite his uncomfortable stiffness, Ishmael Black could not help a fleeting smile at this remark, though it died in its birth, and there was only harshness in his voice as he spoke again:

"I will not impose upon your good nature, this time. Keep your seat. And remember—"

"I've forgotten how to forget, if I ever knew, my dear sir," bowed the Nameless Sport, with a cold smile. "You are better acquainted with 'Way-up than I, of course. If you will mention a spot where you would like to see me on business, I dare say I can find those who will direct me aright."

"I will find you when I wish, never fear," shortly retorted the other, entering the stage and slamming the door behind him.

"All aboard!" cried the Unknown, nimbly climbing up to his former position on the box-seat. "Farewell, my hearties, until our next meeting! And look after Johnson, I beg of you! It would quite break my heart if harm should come to the poor innocent, through his awful awkwardness. And—now I think of it—tell the shoticarypop to chalk up the peppermint and paregoric to me, will you? Hang the expense, when a gentleman like Johnson is in difficulties! Drive on, Cap!"

"Ef I kin fer laughin', why don't ye say, pard?" chuckled Hicks, almost as badly "doubled up" as poor Johnson himself, though from a very different cause. "Good Lawd! the way! Fun? That don't begin to tell it all! An' me a-thinkin' as how you'd git your everlastin'! Fu'st Two-story. Then the boss. Next the Petticuts. Then—durn my cats ef I hain't got to sicker out loud ef the boss takes my years off clean down to my boot-tops!"

And the worthy driver did laugh; laugh until he gasped and choked, and was only relieved by the sturdy thumping which the Nameless Sport gave him between the shoulders. But then, as the stage passed out of the defile and entered a level, pleasant valley, where 'Way-up stood in all its glory, Cap Hicks suddenly grew sober and earnest again.

"It's a mighty slim chance, pard, but it's the last one you'll git afore it's too late," he hurriedly muttered, his eyes filling with a yearning light, his wrinkled face full of solicitude. "Slide down over the back an'make a break fer the hills! You'll hev start enough fer to hold your own ontel night comes to kiver ye out o' sight!"

"Still harping on that worn-out string, Cap?" laughed the other.

"Mebbe they won't hear nur see ye from the inside, which'll give ye more of a show," hastily continued the driver, pulling his team down to a slow walk, very different from the customary manner of entering town. "Or ef they do, I'll see that they ain't in too big a hurry to out-foot an' after ye! These durned critters is jest ready fer a runaway—see'em jerk!"

It was easy enough to see Cap Hicks jerk. He was sawing the bits back and forth in the jaws of his horses, causing them to rear and pitch, frightened and angry both.

"Ef they takes tha'r heads, 'tain't nothin' in

town as'll stop 'em, bet yer life on that, pard!" he muttered, his eyes glowing vividly. "Git over the ruff an'skin out—an' the good Lord guide ye safe!"

"Drop it, Cap," coldly returned the Nameless. "I don't know how to run, even if I felt like it. I don't feel like it. Why should I?"

"Even ef you ain't Prince Amory—"

A low, careless laugh cut his words short.

"You heard me deny her? If I could do that, think you I'd own up to you, good-hearted fellow though I know you are? Once more, Cap, you're barking up the wrong tree. I'm not your Prince Amory. I never was your Prince Amory. I never will be Prince Amory—with Mrs. Prince Amory so terribly close at hand!"

With a shrug of his shoulders the Nameless Sport uttered the concluding part of that sentence, after a barely perceptible pause.

"I don't ax it ag'in, pard," a little stiffly muttered the driver, as he ceased his efforts to irritate his team. "Ef you ain't him as you carry the face of, you're somebody else. You've treated me white, and I hate to see you ruunin' your head into a trap out o' which you kin only go to the bone-yard."

"Whither the best of us must wend sometime, Cap."

"Your time 'll come mighty sudden, pard, ef you once git inside o' 'Way-up. You ain't a fool, ef—"

"If I do persist in acting like one, eh?" laughed the other.

"You ain't a fool!" doggedly persisted Hicks. "You see the sort o' critter that Two-story Johnson is."

An ogre to frighten little children with, perhaps. But I'm a man grown, Cap," laughed the unknown.

"Able to han'le a dozen sech as him ef he comes at ye open, and in broad day. But will h3?"

"If not, and he tries it from cover or on a dark night, so much the worse for Johnson, Cap. He'll find I'm a bit of an owl so far as seeing after sunset is concerned, and that while I may be a bit playful in the sunshine, I'm all business in the dark."

"An' the boss?"

"That's something different," frankly admitted the Nameless Sport. "I got the best of him back yonder, thanks to his dipping a little into this spook business of yours, Cap, but—"

"He see'd what she see'd, an' what I see'd afore either of 'em," interposed the driver, with growing earnestness. "You say you ain't Prince Amory, but you kerry his face 'long with ye. Ef he was to show up in heaven all the angels in heaven couldn't save him from the rope! Not only the Black gang'd drap onto him, but the White crowd wouldn't hold back an inch more than the rest. They'd fergit the'r own squabbles long enough to make sure o' him. An' you toto his face on your shoulders."

"Ergo, I'll have to pay the penalty of his crimes—his wrongs, I should say, seeing how deeply you are interested in the unfortunate young gentleman," was the prompt correction. "All right, Cap! if the band mu t play, at least I'll have the satisfaction of hearing the music. And—who knows? Maybe I'll not be the only one to do the light fantastic."

"It's dead settled, then?" asked Hicks.

"Dead settled, Cap!"

"Then I'm done. Git up, you durned critters!"

The silken cracker whistled through the air and awakened the echoes, sending the chafing animals forward with a leap that severely tests the traces, and almost jerked the heads of the inside passengers off their respective shoulders.

And two minutes later the stage was rolling rapidly along the one regularly laid-out street of 'Way-up.

A town of the usual mining-camp variety, after that camp has settled down into a town, losing some of its "wild and woolly" ideas, but gaining no particular graces instead.

One long street, on each side of which were scattered buildings large and buildings small, for the most part without paint or "gingerbread work." With here and there a vacant spot, perhaps marked by blackened debris. With an occasional canvas tent or shed.

With dust or mud knee-deep in the street, according to the nature of the weather. With the scent of stale liquor hanging over everything, and tin cans strewn promiscuously about to trip up the unwary footman or startle the racing broncho with a sharp clatter beneath its hoofs.

In only one respect did 'Way-up differ from the ordinary mining town on a week-day. Ordinarily from sun to sun the street was deserted and the numerous drinking-places quiet. But now the street was alive with men bustling to and fro, and the saloons were plainly reaping a harvest.

There was but one hotel in the place, a big, square structure, rude on the exterior as it was bare and comfortless inside; and Cap Hicks, with traditional flourish, drew up before this house.

Almost before the wheels ceased to revolve, the Nameless Sport was on the ground, opening the door nearest the hotel, hat in his other hand as he smilingly bowed to Mrs. Prince Amory.

"It's Hobson's choice, I reckon, ma'am, from what I can see. Let us hope and pray that it may prove like a black walnut: sweet enough inside, for those who have tolerable strong stomachs. Thanks!" and he gave the gloved fingers a gentle squeeze as he assisted the lady to alight.

Pale and statuesque, she lifted her blue eyes, only to start back with a half-stifled cry of—it terror?

"Another bite?" laughed the Sport, thinking that it was his face that startled her; but he was mistaken.

The frightened blue eyes were glaring over his shoulder and at the face of another up the street. Only for an instant. Then her thick veil was dropped over her face, and leaning on the arm of Adam Fanshaw, she hurried into the open door of the hotel.

Even as he spoke the Nameless Sport realized his error, and swiftly turned to glance in that direction, trying to discover the cause of that haunted gaze.

He saw a number of men looking that way, the majority of them approaching the stage, with that aimless curiosity so common in isolated locations, where daily and hourly trains are unknown, where the arrival of the stage is a looked-forward-to event. There were several rather striking countenances and shapes, for 'Way-up was something cosmopolitan in its way. Among them one tall, blonde, dissipated-looking fellow, whose clothing showed signs of considerable hard usage, and much as though their owner had been indulging in a swim without the usual preliminary disrobing.

This was Jim-Jam Jones, fresh from the little secluded valley where he had received his first baptism at the hands of Red Turner.

Instinct, rather than reason, told the Nameless Sport that he need not look further for the cause of that frightened ejaculation and look of—was it terror? It could hardly be of joy, since the lady made such a hasty flight from the scene, at the same time hiding her own face so carefully.

"Was it to me, or to you that yonder blonde gentleman bowed, a moment ago?" coolly asked the Nameless Sport, turning to Ishmael Black, who was the last to alight from the stage, and who had failed to catch that cry or note that peculiar look. "I've such a wretched memory! But it appears to me, very dimly, that I've met the person before!"

"That? Jim-jam Jones, our pet bummer," shortly replied Black. "May I have one word with you, sir?"

"A whole book full, if you prefer, my dear sir," was the prompt reply, as the Nameless Sport yielded to the bony hand that lightly touched his arm. "You're about my only acquaintance in town, and naturally I'm hugely delighted with your agreeable society."

"If you keep on after the same fashion in which you've begun, I reckon you'll get acquainted fast enough," was the grim response to this light remark. "You've spoken for a high lot already!"

"It's well to be prepared for all emergencies, you know. I've come to 'Way-up to stay and in due course of time no doubt I'll need that bit of elevated real estate. Still, I'll hardly give orders to have it opened up, just at present."

"I'm not threatening you. th ugh you seem to think it," was the grave response. "You got the best of me back yonder, but you acted white in the end, and I'm not one to forget such an act as that. I'd far rather have you for an ally than an enemy, and you will do well to consider this fact a little. I don't ask for your decision at once. I simply say that you must choose one side or the other, or else pull out of 'Way-up before you are driven into a corner. Lives are mighty cheap, and you have got one bad man on your track already."

"One or a dozen, it don't matter so much, dear fellow. Not that I'm a typical b-a-d man but when it comes to crowding without law or reason, I'm mighty apt to take the room I need for comfort."

"You can't buck against a hundred with any show for your money!"

"I have done it before this, and it's not my ghost that's talking to you, either. I wear gloves when I'm off duty, but my fingers are all sandpaper when I strip for business. And when I strip for business, some one is going to get hurt. Not hinting at you of course."

Boastful though this looks on paper, Ishmael Black, no mean judge of such matters himself, did not take it as empty bluffing. There was a cool, matter-of-fact air and look about this man without a name, that told he was talking straight from the Scriptures.

Cap Hicks, having cast off the mailbag, was just turning his team to take it to the stables, when a sharp, agitated cry broke in upon the two men conversing together. They were moving back a little to clear the wheels, when the cry was followed almost instantly by a pistol shot.

No need to ask at whom directed!

With a sharp cry, cut short in his throat, the Nameless Sport half-wheeled in his tracks, then fell face downward to the ground!

## CHAPTER VIII.

"IS THIS AN INSANE ASYLUM?"

IT was the wisest as well as the only course left open for Jim-jam Jones, and consequently he stood not on the order of his going, but "got" instanter, cleaner and soberer than he had been for many a long day.

"If the poor devil don't catch cold after his bath," laughed the fat mine-owner, following the unsteady retreat of the drunkard with his little pig eyes. "I reckon it's been many a long day since poor Jones indulged so extensively in pure water."

"He gits off heap cheaper then I 'lowed when I fu'st mounted the crazy critter," muttered Red Turner, a trace of regret in the gaze that followed the retreating bummer. "But mebbe it's all right. The little gal axed me to dip lightly. 'Tain't much, knowin' how she's suffered—"

The sentence was cut short with a sharp click of the teeth as though Red for a moment had forgotten the presence of White. But the fat man had keen enough ears when inclination tended that way, and though he had not forgotten the warning given him by Turner only a short time before, he felt that he must improve the opportunity thus offered him.

"And the worst of it is, old friend, that her sufferings may be said to be just beginning," he hurriedly muttered, one hand nervously fumbling with the ivory-hafted revolver at his hip. "Until now, she has been feeding on hope, so to speak, but—"

"I axed you to drop it, didn't I?" interposed Turner, with a lurid glow in the black eyes that shot a sidelong, upward glance into the fat, rosy face. "Talkin' ain't no good. It cain't ondo the past, kin it?"

"I only wish it could, Turner—cursed if I don't!" ejaculated the mine-owner, his pendulous lip protruding, his head shaking half-angrily, half-regretfully. "I'd agree right willingly to stand all the loss, if Prince Amory was back and in the boots Ishmael Black fills!"

Red Turner made no reply. He was slow to pick up new thoughts. It took time to lift his mind from one rut into another that ran in a contrary direction. And unless he could see the lay of the ground fairly well before him, he was cautious about advancing.

"If you'd only let me talk it over with you, confidentially, my dear fellow," resumed White, almost pleadingly. "If you wasn't so infernally bull-necked about it! Why, man, it's for her good, even more than for mine, I tell you! Think of all that money can do for her! Just try to picture to yourself how bright and gay and healthy she was a year ago!"

A short, rasping laugh checked him. It came from the throat of Red Turner, but the face into which George White looked just then, was not much like that of a mirthful man.

"Ef I was to try, ye say? Es ef it needed tryin', ruther! Hain't I watched the change night an' day, ever sence you come to me an' showed the papers that proved him a imp fresh from hell? Hain't I watched the little gal changin' bit by bit, growin' paler an' quieter, pinin' away ontel she's only the shudder o' what she was afore he came creepin' in here to breathe sweet pizen into her innocent ears? Don't I watch the hungry look in the two eyes o' her ontel it makes me sick in my own tough heart? An' you say—"

Red Turner turned abruptly away, ashamed to let a man like White detect the unusual moisture that came into his glowing eyes.

"I chose my words poorly, Turner," said White, not a little encouraged by this unexpected outburst from one whom he had set down as one with about as much sentiment or sympathy as a block or a stone. "I meant well, as I think you'll admit when you come to think it all over. What I wanted was to make you see that our interests pull together."

"Not in bloody harness, jedge," sharply uttered Turner.

"That you must get Miss Kate away from here, unless you want to see her die or go crazy," hurriedly added White, ignoring the blunt interruption. "A change of scene will rouse her from this painful brooding over what can't be helped by either you or me. With money in plenty, you can save her; without it—Well, I leave it to you."

"I kin go to work and—"

"See her pine away by inches long before you can gain the hundredth part of what I'll give you for the work of a single minute!"

Red Turner looked up, a toss of his head casting the long, straight locks back of his shoulders. One brown finger tapped the fat man on the bosom as though to emphasize the words that dropped deliberately from his lips.

"Jedge, you're a rich man, an' I'm a poor devil. You're educated, an' all I know come to me natral like. You kin walk with the best of the high-toned people, an' git tips o' the hat an' shakes o' the han' whar I'd be looked down onto as wuss than the dirt beneath your feet. I know all this, better even than you could tell me."

"Oh, come, Turner," stammered White, taken aback by this unexpected plainness, almost as much as the abrupt change of subject.

"You're a gentleman, an' I'm a Injun. You could putt me up at auction an' bid me off fer hog feed, as cheaper chuck than slop, ef the value putt on me an' sech as me by gents of your class be the rulin' price. We ain't got no souls to be saved. We're only fit fer to do the work that's too dirty or too resky fer the likes o' you to take hold of. An' we're durned fools ef we kick ag'in' your offers!"

"Confound it, man! what are you driving at?" a little hotly exclaimed the mine-owner. "Haven't I always treated you white? Have I ever gone back on my word with you? What more can you ask?"

"Fer you to listen to a few more words, jedge," was the cold response. "You know I killed a man that you wanted got out of your way. You offered me money to do the job, but you ain't fergot that I wouldn't take it, hev ye?"

"It is still ready for you, Turner, whenever you want it."

"Keep it to pay fer diggin' your own grave, you overgrown rascal!" cried Red, with a sudden outburst of long-pent-up passion. "You needn't start an' scowl an' grip your weepin', jedge. I ain't a man to skeer at the likes o' you, an' little as I be 'longside, I'm your master when it comes to anythin' like manhood. I'd eat a hole through you an' back ag'in' afore you could hit my shudder—an' you know it!"

That was the worst of it; White did know it! Although his hand was gripping the butt of a revolver, while Red Turner stood before him with arms carelessly pendent, he knew that the little man was more than his equal, knew that in any actual struggle between them he would surely come out second best.

"I don't know why you're kicking up such an infernal row, when all I want is to serve you and yours to the best of my ability, Turner," he muttered, rather lamely.

"I ain't kickin' up no row," responded Red, with his usual quiet. "I'm only makin' you see that you've made a big mistake in your man when you offer me money fer murder. I told you to drop it, but you wouldn't do it. You stuck out fer a plainer answer, an' now you kin chaw on it as long as you likes the taste."

"Ef you want Ishmael Black putt out o' the way—"

"Confound it, man, I was only jesting!"

"Ef you want Ishmael Black putt out o' the way, an' ain't got the grit to tackle him your own self, don't come to me," col'ly persisted Turner, ignoring the hasty interruption. "Ef you was to turn yen' hill into pure gold an' offer it to me fer the job, I'd tell ye to go to the devil. Ef that's blood on my han's—an' I don't deny it—money didn't buy it. Love fer you didn't buy it."

"But Kate—for your child—"

A peculiar pallor came into the face of Turner as White stammered forth these words. His thin lips curled back until his small, even teeth were revealed by their parting. And there was a low, deadly earnestness in his voice as he spoke slowly:

"Ef I was you, jedge, I wouldn't let her name cross my lips. Mebbe you mean well, but don't you do it, now! An' ef I was you, I'd take a walk fer the good o' my health. You know the road you come, I reckon?"

"But—curse it, man!" with a half-savage, half-frightened air. "You won't go and blab it all to—"

"I ain't any more in love with Boss Black then I be with you, jedge," was the cold interposition. "He's a man growed, an' ef his han' can't keep his head, he's mighty little business in these parts."

"Then I have your word to keep mum?"

"I ain't one o' the fetch-an'-kerry sort, jedge. I reckon the boss he's bin your pardner long enough to sleep with one eye open. It ain't noways likely I could tell him anythin' more than he knows or looks fer, ef I was to take the trouble, which I won't. It's him an' you fer it, fer all o' me. My line o' traps don't run that way."

Red Turner wheeled and moved slowly toward the cabin, leaving the thoroughly-discomfited schemer to beat a retreat as best he might.

For once the corpulent mine-owner did not feel the heat of the sun as he hastened down the valley, following the winding trail that led to 'Way-up, or if he felt, failed to heed. There were curses on his lips, and curses in his heart, all directed toward Red Turner.

He had never dreamed of a repulse such as this. An Indian to have conscientious scruples! A red-handed assassin to refuse gold for the shedding of a little more blood! A low fellow like Red Turner to read him—George Washington White, gentleman!—a lecture on honor and morality! That was the worst of all!

"The canting, hypocritical scoundrel! The insolent beggar!" panted the mine-owner, fairly boiling over with rage and mortification. "I'd ought to have blown his infernal brains out, then and there!"

But even as he muttered the words, he knew that it was no sentiment of mercy or pity that had held his hand. He knew that if he had dared make the attempt, one of the two must have per-

ished, and he felt just as certain that he would have been that one.

He couldn't drive that reflection from his mind, although he cursed, cursed himself, cursed his folly in so openly showing his cards, before thoroughly sounding the fellow; above all, he cursed Red Turner.

"I've got to work lively if I head him off! He'll carry the news to that infernal Black, of course, hoping to get paid for it. And so he would—big pay! Black would like nothing better than to have just such an excuse for putting me. His lips must be sealed—but who'll do it surest?"

Never mind his musings. They are not agreeable reading, and quite enough has been recorded to show the nature of the thoughts that occupied him all the way to 'Way-up.

He entered town only a short distance behind Jim-jam Jones, on whom the restoratives applied by Kate and Red Turner had wrought a truly marvelous change, and like all the others, White was attracted by the bustle attending the arrival of the stage.

He was near enough to catch a glimpse of Ishmael Black as that worthy emerged from the coach, and that sight drove all other thoughts from his busy brain, for he knew that when he left 'Way-up, a couple of hours before, his rival was in town. How then came he in the stage? What new deviltry was he up to? What—

As these thoughts flashed through his disturbed brain, White kept the rival mine-owner in view, hardly noticing the person he was talking to at first. Not until, in getting out of the way of the moving stage, the Nameless Sport turned his face for a moment in that direction.

For a moment he stood like one transfixed, staring at the shapely figure of the man whose handsome face had so strangely shocked him—the face of one whom, until that instant, he had believed dead—the face of Prince Amory!

In that instant what thoughts went surging through his excited brain! Prince Amory alive! Returned to 'Way-up! Talking amicably with Ishmael Black! What did that mean? Were they plotting against him? Had the truth come out? Was Red Turner in the plot against him? Had he lied in swearing that he had killed—

A harsh, inarticulate cry broke from his lips, and whipping forth a revolver, White fired a shot at the Nameless Sport, almost without stopping to take aim, without giving a single thought as to the consequences.

A cry of savage exultation escaped from him as, through the blue smoke of his shot, he saw the Nameless Sport reel back and fall prostrate with a stifled cry, such as a human being gives when suddenly overtaken by a painful death. And like a revelation came to him the safest course to pursue, on which he promptly acted.

"It's Prince Amory, the thief and forger!" he shouted, rushing forward as he cocked his weapon for another shot. "A thousand dollars for his capture, dead or alive! I call on you all to aid me in making the arrest—in the name of the law!"

As he uttered the last words, he halted and tried to steady his shaken nerves for a second shot at the prostrate figure, but before he could secure anything like a certain aim, intending to make all sure while he had the chance, there came a swift movement on the part of the fallen man.

A white hand reached out and a heavy explosion followed. The pistol was dropped from the mine-owner's hand to explode on striking the ground, its owner clapping a hand over his eyes, staggering back with a wild yell of pain and surprise.

With a catlike leap, the Nameless Sport rose to his feet and covered the intervening space, grasping the fat assassin, and with a swift kick knocking his feet from under him, and dropping him on the flat of his back with a violence that drove the breath from his carcass with an explosive grunt! And planting one foot heavily upon the rounded paunch, a cocked revolver filling each hand, the Nameless Sport glanced keenly about him, his blue eyes all aglow, his handsome face pale with rage, his voice ringing out sharp and menacing:

"Is this an insane asylum? Are all of you infernal bedlamites? Or is it simply a dead set at me, personally? If so—walk up to the captain's office and put down your names for a six-by-two berth in the bone-yard! One at a time, or the lot together—don't be bashful!"

Ishmael Black was to the full as much surprised as any of the rest of those within eye and ear shot, but he quickly recovered his scattered wits as he saw a chance to make a point in the desperate game he was playing, and as promptly improved the opening.

"Hands off, gentlemen!" he thundered, drawing his own revolvers as he saw a bustle among some whom he recognized as open adherents of his rival. "It's man to man, and White opened the ball! Let him foot the bill if he can, but the first man that chips in has got to buck against me! That's sober business, gentlemen!"

"Back up the boss, lads!" cried out one sturdy fellow, and instantly there was a division of the gathering crowd.

The adherents of White seemed the most numerous at first, but the party behind Ishmael

Black showed no signs of backing down. And a cry of exultation broke from their lips as one of their number called attention to a number of men who were rapidly coming up from the lower pass; none other than the band who had stopped the stage under the lead of Two-story Johnson.

"We kin clean 'em out, boss, ef you say the word!" cried the same enthusiastic follower who had first spoken. "It's got to come some time, an' this is as good as any other, ain't it?"

"Not a shot nor a blow unless I give the word and set the example!" sharply, clearly cried out Black. "If they choose to invite the test, we'll give them all they can stomach, I reckon; but let them make the first move!"

As a single word from him would have precipitated the conflict which all concerned saw must come sooner or later, so his decision was respected now by his followers. And as the White gang lacked a leader for the present, they were hardly in a condition to press the fight.

All this passed with great rapidity, and the Nameless Sport was still glancing defiantly around in quest of the first one who would venture to accept his sharp challenge. He saw the instinctive shrinking back, and a short, mocking laugh parted his lips as he removed his foot from the stomach of his fallen foe.

"Get up, my wasp-waisted daisy, and quit gouging your peepers! The gentlemen have left it all to our lonesome selves, and I'm quite at your service, ready for anything from shaking hands to cutting throats! Here's your tool—hallo!" as he stooped and picked up the revolver, mock surprise in his tones and face as he examined it. "Is this the way you catch the card a friendly sport slings at you? Reckon you'll have to go down in your arsenal for another gun; this one's spiked!"

And so it was. Whether by chance or a truly marvelous skill, considering the scant time taken for aim, the derringer ball had struck the left front of the cylinder in such a manner as to plug up two of the chambers and cover the metal between, thus effectually disabling the weapon for the time being, since it would be impossible to revolve the cylinder until the lead was cut away.

And it was the spatters of lead flying from that contact, that led George White to tear at his eyes, thinking both balls had been shot out by the bullet.

Only for a few moments, however, and as soon as that crushing weight was lifted from his stomach, the mine-owner scrambled to his feet, brushing the blood from his face, clearing his eyes, staring half-doubtingly into that handsome, mocking face.

"You're Prince Amory—I arrest you for—"

"Oh, now, see here!" sharply interrupted the Nameless Sport, dropping the "spiked gun" and grasping the fat man by the shoulder, gazing keenly into his blood-sprinkled face. "Let up on that if you please! I can stand a good deal—I'm quite willing to give you another pot-shot at closer range, if you're hog enough to ask it; to do anything in reason, rather than irritate a lunatic—but I've got to draw a line somewhere, and I gouge it out at that name. I gouge it out *deep!*"

With eyes that seemed almost starting from their sockets, White stared at the speaker whose face was so close to his, trying to read the truth, even as his rival had tried not long before. How could he be deceived? Hadn't he known that face for years? Hadn't he been a daily associate, didn't he know every line and feature, even better than he knew his own countenance? And yet—

"I could have taken oath—I can almost swear—"

"Mad because you made such a miserable shot?" briskly broke in the Nameless Sport. "Well, I don't know as I blame you any for that. If I was to make such a public exhibition of myself, I'd swear too! Swear off on public shooting until I could hit a barn when locked up inside!"

"If you ain't Prince Amory—"

"Must I give you a kick to make you take a hint, dear sir?" cried the Nameless Sport, his manner changing instantly, his voice growing hard and cold. "This is becoming monotonous. Every soul I've run up on this day has pasted that name all over me, and refused to believe me when I solemnly declared that I am not, never was, Prince Amory. Now I give one and all fair warning that the next time I'm called Prince Amory, I'll accept the name and make the fellow prove it. I'll be a prince, if it is insisted upon, but I'll take the privileges of a king with it. And let me tell you that King Stork is a dyspeptic alongside of me when I'm hungry!"

"Allow me to put in a word, my friend," said Ishmael Black, stepping forward and running his black eyes keenly over the interested gathering. "Gentlemen, one and all. You know me, and I think I may say without fear of contradiction, that since our acquaintance has been mutual, not a man within reach of my voice has ever had grounds for accusing me of lying."

"Divil swally the wan that'd dare think that same!"

Other eager voices were uplifted, but the words were cut short as Ishmael Black lifted his hand impatiently.

"I simply wish to state that I, too, was at first deceived into believing this gentleman the runaway thief and forger, Prince Amory, from the really strong resemblance which he bears to that rascal, in face as well as figure. But he satisfied me of my mistake, just as I dare affirm he will cheerfully satisfy any or all of you, if approached in a gentlemanly fashion.

"I give this testimony unasked, because I feel that I have wronged an innocent man by even for a moment confounding him with a self-convicted criminal," added Black, stepping back with a stiff bow.

"And it comes with all the more grace from your lips, my dear sir, when I make it known that I openly declared my sympathies in this little trouble lay wholly with the other side," bowed the Nameless Sport.

All this time White was watching him with almost painful intentness, trying to solve the doubts that still struggled in his befogged brain. And, just as it had once or twice before on that same day, the likeness which had at first seemed perfect, gradually grew less and less striking, until the same conviction came over him. He had made a grand mistake: this man was *not* Prince Amory!

George Washington White realized that he had rather lost ground by the unfortunate affair, while his rival had gained it, and he rallied himself as quickly as possible, to make the best of a bad case.

"I begin to see my wretched mistake," he mumbled, as he bowed to the stranger. "I can only offer the excuse which you have already heard: I took you for a wretch who has well-nigh brought ruin upon my gray hairs. I humbly ask your pardon. I am ashamed—"

"Don't mention it, my dear fellow," cheerily cried the Nameless Sport, grasping the half-extended hand and shaking it cordially, as he clapped the fat man on the soiled shoulder. "I'm willing to forgive and forget, and you should be more than eager to do the last—I know I would in your place, after making such an extraordinary poor shot!"

"I'm glad, rather than aught else," with a sickly smile. "If I had hit my mark, I'd be out a valuable ally, if I understood you aright."

"As to what?"

"Your sympathies in this unfortunate dispute. I'm G. W. White."

"And I'm A. L. L. White, so there's a pair of us," laughed the other, with a resounding slap that made the fat man wince again. "But all the same, you're about the worst shot I ever run across, and I've worn out a good share of leather in my time. If there's many more like you in town, blessed if I don't begin to smell a bonanza! I'll open a gallery and take pupils—learn the old idea how to shoot!"

"Please put my name down first, then," laughed White, with an affectation of enjoying the jest at his expense, but visibly fidgeting as though anxious to get off by himself to puzzle the whole affair out. "Not to change the subject—if I can be of any service to you, as a stranger in our town, pray command me!"

"Thanks. I'm never a stranger, no matter where I may drop down. My hat is my roof-tree, and—hallo!" with a sudden start and eager gaze through the crowd—already thinning out, now that the "circus" was over, without a prospect of renewal—toward a tall figure that was leaning idly against the corner of a building hard by. "Can I believe my eyes? Is it—my old acquaintance, Jonesy?"

With an eager face he moved forward toward the bummer, and White, only too glad of the opportunity, turned and waddled off in a contrary direction.

Jim-jam Jones made no sign if he heard that call. He was beginning to feel dull and languid again, after the unusual quickening his sluggish blood had received at the hands of Red Turner. His hands were in his empty pockets, mechanically feeling for what he knew only too well was not to be found there. His throat was parched. He was dying for a drink, yet his "gentility" was not lowered sufficiently to permit him to beg a glass of whisky.

"Jimmy, you brick, how goes it after all these years?" gayly cried the Nameless Sport, catching one hand as the bummer mechanically drew it from his pocket, and slapping the other across it with a report before giving the usual pump-handle movement. "It's like a glimpse up through the golden gates to sight your beautiful mug once more! And I thinking I'd have to hunt up a mirror if I wanted to 'smile' with some one whose face I knew! Come along, and make an old pard happy by showing him where they retail liquid lightning by the jugful! Do come!"

"Really, you have the advantage of me, sir," mechanically muttered Jones, as he started up from his lounging attitude. "I can't recall your face, though, as a favor, I don't mind showing you the bar I principally patronize. It's just a step around the corner."

"And we'll drink to the lady, eh, you dog?"

laughed the Nameless Sport, as he locked arms with the bummer. "The fair incognita of the stage, you know! By the way, she seemed to recognize you, too!"

"Of course. Everybody knows me," mumbled the bummer, hurrying on.

#### CHAPTER IX.

##### MADAM CORALINE "BRACES UP."

"Of all the women to rush things, hurry or no hurry," panted Adam Fanshaw, dropping into a chair with a suddenness that tested its legs pretty thoroughly, tossing his hat upon the bed and mopping his shining brow vigorously. "Confound it! do you take me for a steam engine?"

He looked toward Mrs. Prince Amory, who had sunk upon the foot of the bed, trembling like a leaf from head to foot. For a moment his surprise held him speechless. He could only realize one incredible fact; that this woman actually had nerves that could be shaken!

"Coraline—my dear girl!" he muttered, rising and attempting to take her trembling hand in his own. "What is the matter? Did that infernal rascal really frighten you? Let me—Geth—thunder!"

The daintily gloved hand was jerked from his grasp and pushed off the arm that was stealing about her waist. And the mate to it—alas, that the truth is so disagreeable!—came in sudden contact with Adam Fanshaw's right ear with a ringing smack that positively denied its being anything akin to a love-tap!

"Hands off, if you please!" the handsome virago uttered, her voice hard and strained, her face showing strangely pale and haggard as she removed vail and bonnet, tossing them on the bed behind her. "Let me alone, can't you? Don't you see I'm half distracted?"

Flushed with anger, all the more perceptible from the fact of his trying to appear his natural pompous self, Adam Fanshaw returned to his seat, making busy use of his handkerchief. He was hotter than ever. The little chamber felt like an oven. He could scarcely gain a full breath. He longed for an excuse to run away and get out of doors, but he dared not make the attempt just then.

Although he would not admit as much to himself, Adam Fanshaw was actually growing afraid of this woman. And yet it was not so long ago that he had taken her up, he told himself, out of pure sympathy and a benevolent wish to better her worldly condition, to lift her into the lap of luxury. What if he did occasionally think of transferring her from that lap to his own? He could afford to be generous. He was his own master and old enough to laugh at the wonder and doubts of his business associates. And it was as a possible future wife that Adam Fanshaw began to patronize Mrs. Prince Amory—to have his ears most roundly boxed at his very first attempt to show his love!

Almost any man would have found it hot under the same circumstances!

On the contrary, Mrs. Prince Amory apparently felt quite chilly, judging from the manner in which she shivered, drawing her shoulders together, bowing forward, staring at vacancy, her gloved fingers intertwined and clasped with spasmodic force.

The same gray, aged look that had come over her face when she confronted the Nameless Sport, had returned. The color fled from her cheeks, even from her full lips. The weight of many years seemed to fall upon her in an instant, drawing deep lines and wrinkles, killing the purity of her complexion, making her haggard and almost ugly!

Adam Fanshaw shifted uneasily on his seat as he noted this disagreeable fact, or collection of facts. He began to fear that the woman on whose nerve and address so much depended was on the point of breaking down just when the crisis rose before them. That meant defeat, after so much outlay, but it might mean more! These wild and woolly men of this barbarous region were so infernally ready with their ropes and their rude ideas of still ruder justice.

His ear was still tingling from that vigorous salute, but Adam Fanshaw resolved to take the chances of another rather than linger in such irritable suspense.

"My dear woman," he said, softening his voice to express as much sympathy and consideration as he could on short notice. "You should not give way after this fashion. Think what is before us—how essential it is for us to keep our wits clear and our nerves steady. Why permit the words or looks of an infernal scoundrel like that to disturb you so greatly? Give me permission, and I'll guarantee that he'll never trouble you after this day."

Mrs. Prince Amory raised her blue eyes to his flushed face, her voice strained and unnatural as she asked:

"You saw him? What do you know of him?" "Only that he treated you with unpardonable insolence, which I would have punished on the spot, only for your positive commands to take no step without your permission," quickly replied Fanshaw, thinking he saw a favorable opening and losing no time in improving it. "It made my blood boil over, but I remembered your wishes and respected them. Now—appoint

me your champion, and I'll read this insolent swaggerer such a lesson as— Eh?"

He checked himself with a stare of amazement as the woman broke into a fit of low laughter, her pallor vanishing like magic, her beauty returning, years dropping from her face like a mask for which she had no further use.

"You mean our bold knight of the barricade, Adam?" she asked, her notes smooth and silvery as of yore.

"Of course, who else?" was the sulky retort.

"And you offer to break a lance with him for my sake?"

"I'd do a thousand-fold more than that if you would only permit," was the quick response.

And for the moment Adam Fanshaw actually meant what he said. For the moment he forgot that his ears were still ringing from her vixenish blow. That he had just seen her without this marvelous mask of beauty, so young, so fresh, so bewitching. And more than all, he forgot the true if trite adage that there is no fool like an old fool.

He even moved a little nearer and attempted to take her hand between his own, but the love-light fled from his eyes, and he hitched back much more rapidly than he had advanced as Mrs. Amory made a swift gesture of contempt, her red lips curling, her blue eyes flashing.

"Don't play silly, Adam; it makes me tired!"

"You decline to trust me, then?"

"Prove yourself worthy of trust first," was the quick retort.

"In what respect have I ever failed you? In what have I proved lacking? What cause have I given you to doubt me?" he stiffly asked.

"In nothing, my dear Adam, as yet," was the cool retort. "I might add that until to-day there has risen no chance for making a botch or scoring a success, but I refrain. Only—mark me, Adam," her voice growing colder and harder as she emphasized her words with a forefinger. "Our alliance is a purely business one. There is nothing in the bond about love or love-making. You are old enough to have better sense, and I—not any in mine, thank you, Adam!"

Adam Fanshaw was silenced, if not crushed. He began to think that possibly he had made a mistake in entering into this business at all. If success rewarded their efforts, it would be a paying speculation, but if this vixen of a woman was to keep him ever at arm's length, he could have made higher wages with far less trouble and risk, at home!

"You seemed all broken up, and I was merely offering my sympathy," he muttered, more to break the silence that was growing peculiarly uncomfortable, than aught else.

"A fig for your sympathy! What is needed now is work, steady and persistent. The game has fairly opened, and we've got to play every card for all it's worth! Are you ready? Can I trust you? Bah!" without pausing for a reply, flinging out one hand with a desperate energy. "I am obliged to trust you! If you fail me—"

"Tell me just what you want attended to first," Fanshaw said, as the woman abruptly paused, her forehead wrinkling darkly. "I've gone into this speculation with my eyes open. Make or break, I'm in it to stay. What comes first?"

"That sounds more like it, Adam," laughed the woman, with another of her swift, bewildering changes. "When you stick to sense and leave sentiment alone, you do admirably!"

"While you shine alike in sense or nonsense," with a half-mocking bow. "But don't you think we'd get along a little faster, if you would stick to business?"

The thrust went home, and Mrs. Amory grew hard and cold again.

"You must keep an eye on that fellow—the Nameless Sport as he calls himself—and the two partners, Black and White. Make it your business to learn if he has a private interview with either one or the other. Shadow him until you are positive he has no alliance with them, or until you find out which one he favors the most."

"A difficult if not risky job, but I'll do my level best."

"Second, study the two partners. Learn all you can of them, of their disposition, their weak points, if they have any. Make it a point to learn which one of the twain will be the easiest to manage, if—"

She broke off abruptly as Adam Fanshaw laughed softly.

"Don't you think that point is already settled?" he asked, with the faintest possible trace of a sneer. "Unless I've forgot how to use my eyes and ears, you've got Ishmael Black on a string already! You can lead him by the nose wherever you choose! For a smile and a love-look from you, the fellow would walk straight into the hottest corner of Tophet!"

The great blue eyes drooped beneath their lashes, and a great sigh fluttered through the ruby lips.

"Time was—but now! I'm growing old and fading out! My hour has fled, never to return, I fear!"

Low and reluctant the speech, not as though in answer to him, but more as in a reverie. For the moment the woman forgot that she was not

alone, and she started spasmodically as Adam Fanshaw spoke again:

"No one else would think that, my dear, as long as you keep them at arm's length and don't give way to that—shall I say it?—abominable temper of yours! Why, even I—"

"You don't count," rudely interposed Mrs. Amory, with a frown that combined both resentment and contempt. "Why should I wear the mask before you? You are one of my cards in this game, just as my dyes and washes and powder, my smiles and sweet looks. I employ you, as I employ them, in order to make my success easier and surer. I don't consider you as a man, at all, because I have no earthly use for you as such."

"You are complimentary, madam!" growled the other.

"I am truthful which is still more extraordinary in me," with a short, hard laugh. "You needed snubbing, Adam, and I had to give it to you the shortest way I knew. Consider yourself snubbed. Bear in mind that I won't have any love-making—while our game is still to be won!"

"And after that?" muttered the poor old fool, forgetting all else in the bewitching smile with which the last words were uttered.

"After that—will be time enough to answer your question, Adam. Now—get down to business. While we are talking that handsome rascal may be working. If I only knew for sure! I could only swear that he is not the real Prince Amory!"

"I thought you had decided against such a wild supposition?"

"So I did—so I have! And so much the worse for him if it turn out to be a wrong one! This time Prince Amory will stay put!"

Again that gray, aged look came over her face, with a rigid clinching of the jaws and glowing light in the blue eyes. Mrs. Prince Amory was hardly the model of a loving wife, just then.

"All right," said Adam Fanshaw, rising and picking up his hat. "If you have no further instructions to give, I might as well be going. As you say, we can't afford to throw away a single point in this game."

"Take a look over the cards, then, and come back to report. See where this man with the face of Prince Amory hangs out at. If at this house, learn just where his room is situated, if you can. If it is dangerously near mine or yours, find some excuse to make a change at once. Go, now, and remember that everything depends on your caution, spiced with boldness!"

Without a word Adam Fanshaw left the room, and Mrs. Amory closed and locked the door behind him, sinking down upon the foot of the bed in her former attitude, frowning gray, and haggard.

"Alive, and here, of all places!" she muttered, pressing her full under-lip between her white teeth and gnawing at it with sullen fierceness. "And I could have taken oath he was dead and rotted, years ago! It turned my blood to ice in my veins, and that alone kept me from shrieking out his name—ten million curses on his head!"

She started at the sound of her own voice, glancing swiftly around the room, shrinking, one hand clutching at the jeweled haft of the dagger that nestled in her bosom—the dagger with which she had attempted the life of that strange man with the face of Prince Amory.

The touch recalled him to mind, and her frown deepened.

"If I had been quicker and surer! If I could have driven this good bit of steel to his heart!" she grated, with savage intensity, as she drew the weapon from its place of concealment and flashed it before her scarcely less brilliant eyes.

"And yet—it might have been a costly act in the end," with another abrupt change. "He carries the face of Prince Amory, but if he is really the prince I knew of old, this western life has wrought a marvelous change in his nature! He would have been just idiot enough to await the blow from my hand, without an effort at defending himself! Or if he had thought of avoiding it, would have been too slow and clumsy by far! If he had showed but a tithe of this man's grit and— Bah! am I growing silly this late in life?"

She laughed shortly, with contempt self directed.

"Stand aside, you, and advance, Ishmael Black!" she muttered, brushing one hand swiftly across her wrinkled brow. "A hard, grim taskmaster you would prove, no doubt, Ishmael," with the ghost of a smile playing about her lips as she recalled the gaunt, stern figure, the hard, sallow face, and the sunken, yet brilliant eyes of the mine-owner. "Flint and steel to mankind, but Adam was not far out of the way when he hinted that to my hands you would prove but putty to be molded how and into what shape pleased my fancy!"

Yet even as she mused thus, she felt that there would be danger in trying to make Ishmael Black her tool. True, he had shown plain signs of falling captive to her regal charms, and he was one who would serve the woman who gained his love through thick and thin, stopping at

nothing as long as her smiles urged him on; but he was not one who could be laughed at and tossed to one side like a worn-out glove when his aid was no longer essential.

"He'd hardly return thanks for a blow, like poor Adam," she half laughed, "and bold as I can be when necessary, I'd hardly like to try that on! I must get a glimpse at this White before I fairly commit myself with Black. It may be he will be the better tool for my ends. If only— Curse that face!" with a sudden outburst of fury, striking the gleaming dagger into the bed on which she sat.

It would persist in rising before her, that pale, haggard face, with the large, blue eyes, the long, forked beard of yellow—the face of Jim-jam Jones. And vainly striving to banish it from mind and sight, she boldly faced it, her face growing hard and cold, a cruel smile contorting her red lips.

"If you *will* have it, Eric, on your own head be it!" she muttered, slowly drawing the dagger from the bed, and touching the steel lightly to her lips. "I'll shake you, if I can, but if you think to revive the past—if you dare to interfere with me now—look to yourself! I failed once—this time I'll make everything *sure!*"

#### CHAPTER X.

##### PRINCE OR NO PRINCE.

THE ghost of a frown shot across the face of the Nameless Sport. The answer came from t enough, but it was altogether too comprehensive. It covered entirely too much ground, and he began to think that, perhaps, he was rushing things a little too fast; that he had made an error in his swift estimate of his old friend Jones.

Yet—apparently the drunkard had but a single idea, which was to lose the least possible time in getting to a saloon, without actually breaking into a disgraceful run. His lips were watering, his fingers twitching, his entire frame shivering with anticipation.

"On the brink of, or just getting over a tussle with the rats," mentally decided the Nameless Sport, after a swift, keen scrutiny, conducted with a little more caution than he had shown up till then. "He isn't a fool, take him by-and-large, but just now he'd sell his soul for a bottle of whisky! I don't want to buy that, but I reckon I'm his customer for something of still greater importance!"

It took but an instant to arrive at this conclusion, and there was no noticeable pause or hesitation between that general admission and the next remark of the Unknown.

"And yet, Jonesy—you are Jones, ain't you?" coming to an abrupt halt, swinging around so as to face the bummer, peering keenly into his haggard face, the wrinkle deepening between his own brows.

"Of course I'm Jones! The idea of my *not* being Jones!" and the poor wretch laughed nervously, shrinking from that close scrutiny, shivering afresh as he began to dread losing his coveted drink, after all.

The Nameless Sport grasped his thin hand and shook it heartily, laughing softly, with an air of deep relief.

"I felt that I couldn't be mistaken, and yet, do you know, when that fair one with the golden locks asked me if I could inform her under just what name you sailed at present, for the life o' me I couldn't place you!"

"I'm Jones, of course. Changed by hard wear and harder knocks, you know. Down on my luck just at present, but the skies are growing clearer, and when I brace up a little— This is the place, pard!"

There was no pretense in the trembling eagerness with which Jones uttered these words, nor in the half-wild light that filled his sunken eyes. He was dying for a "bracer," and the Nameless Sport was acute enough to see that he could hope for little reliable information while that frightful thirst was wholly unquenched.

"And this the hour, Jonesy! Do or die, we'll have a whack at the liquid elephant. And if he downs me, pard: if the poison strikes in and turns me stiff instead of limber; if the fates decree that I'm to be a sclemcholly sacrifice on the sacred shrine of friendship and bad whisky: administer on my effects, Jonesy! Wipe out the score by putting my hat in soak. Plant me deep, where the gopher won't disturb my peaceful slumbers, and plant a Jimson weed at the top-side end as a sweet-scented offering for old times' sake!"

"Particular friend of mine, Patsey," huskily uttered Jim-jam Jones as they entered the saloon which, by some chance was only occupied by the owner, a broad-shouldered, low-browed, ill-favored specimen of the genus rough. "Just in on the stage, and wants a drop of your best to wash the dust out of his air-passages."

"Not a drop, but a bottle, if you've got it in that shape, my laddybuck," quickly added the Nameless Sport, reading aright the meaning of that cold, insolent stare. "And at a table, if you please. It makes me tired to stand up. Jones, if you dare to pull your weasel I'll take it as a willful insult!" he added, sharply, tossing a gold coin on the rude bar, then catching the

drunkard by the arm and moving back to the table furthest from the door.

Patsey was willing enough to serve them after the sight of gold, and quickly placed a bottle with a gorgeous label and a couple of rather dingy glasses before them.

"Lay out the change in bottled nectar, Patsey, as far as it will go, and Pard Jones will call around for it this evening or in the morning," carelessly uttered the Nameless Sport, as the barkeeper offered the amount due him. "As a stranger in this burg, I may not be able to find the way back again as soon as I get thirsty, you see."

"I'll take them with me, Patsey, if you'll be so kind as to wrap them up to look like a pair of new boots, or a—in fact, anything respectable, you know, Patsey," hastily whispered the drunkard, his eyes glowing brightly. "It will save a trip, you see, pard," with a pitiful smile toward his companion, "and I can drop in on you whenever you think best. Unless—unless you object to walking with a fellow who carries a bundle!"

It was a miserable subterfuge, to be sure, but the Nameless Sport could not have been better satisfied. Such a slave to liquor would not be difficult to pump dry!

He declared his freedom from all such silly prejudices, and deftly knocked the neck off the bottle, pouring out a full glass for Jim-jam Jones, his left hand screening the few drops he apportioned to himself.

At a single gulp Jones emptied his glass, and the Nameless Sport immediately replenished it, leaning back in his chair and leaving the bottle convenient to the hand of his companion.

"Seems to me you're looking older than when I saw you last, my dear fellow," blandly uttered the man without a name. "And altered, though still devilishly handsome and all that, of course. At first, do you know," leaning forward and lowering his voice confidentially, "I actually believed the fair one was on the point of fainting or going into a fit, or something of that nature! She gave a little cry, and glared over my shoulder just as naturally as Lady Macbeth does when she wants to call the turn on that painted dagger, but tries to steal a sight before backing her judgment with good money! But it was a mighty healthy old ghost, Jonesy—just the same sweet spook you catch sight of when you look into the glass to assure yourself that your beauty-sleep has done its sworn duty!"

"I—I hardly catch your meaning," stammered Jones.

He spoke the truth, though the Nameless Sport affected to set it down as the coyness of a gallant. He played his part the best he knew how, with his scant knowledge as to the material he had to work upon, but after wasting at least an hour—after trying banter, coaxing, traps and ruses—he finally reached the conclusion that Jim-jam Jones had not caught sight of Mrs. Prince Amory's face, or if so, had been too utterly broken up to recognize it.

When fully satisfied that this was the case, he abandoned the subject, and did his best to blot it from the mind of his companion by calling more whisky to aid him, and then, with a hasty excuse, he left the drunkard to finish the newly-opened bottle, and made the best of his way back to the hotel, where he secured a room and immediately retired to it.

Not altogether for rest, though he naturally required this after his long ride that day. He dropped on the rude bed, but his eyes did not close. Staring at the rough planking that formed the ceiling he gave himself over to deep and busy thought that lasted until the loud, clangorous echo of the big bell announced the readiness of supper.

The Nameless Sport lost no time in seeking the eating-room, taking a seat from whence he could overlook the rest of the company. He seemed wholly occupied with his food, but nevertheless he saw all who came into the room.

Among others he recognized Adam Fanshaw, but that worthy came in alone. Mrs. Prince Amory apparently was not hungry, of else she preferred taking refreshments in her own room.

Ishmael Black was among the number, and he bowed most cordially to the Nameless Sport as he took a seat at a little distance. Either George Washington White took his meals elsewhere, or he was late, for though the man without a name lingered until all the other guests had taken their departure, he saw nothing of the fat member of the firm.

When he left the dining-room it was to retreat again to his chamber, lying on the bed in the dark, smoking a cigar and thinking busily. Not one, but half a dozen cigars were burnt out before he arose, took his hat, and left the hotel.

Once outside he acted more like a man thoroughly acquainted with the town than the entire stranger he had declared himself. Without pause or hesitation he strode on until before a brightly lighted-up building, through the open door of which came a busy hum of human voices.

He paused just without the circle of light, feeling quickly about his person as though to assure himself his tools were in their accustomed

places, then strode forward, and pushing aside the door, entered what proved to be a saloon, beyond which, as frequently is the case, a gambling "outfit" could be seen in full blast.

The instant he entered the busy hum died out, telling quite as plainly as open admission that he had been the principal topic of discussion. But the Nameless Sport gave no sign of annoyance or consciousness as he quietly made his way to the bar, pushing back the front of his hat with a careless gesture, smiling half apologetically around the little group of faces as he blandly spoke:

"Good-evening, gentlemen. Will any or all of you take pity on a stranger who is mortal dry, but who has taken a sacred oath to never indulge without better company than lives beneath his own hat? No compulsion, of course, but I've got a vacant space in my heart-album for the photograph of every gentleman that so far honors me!"

Polite, yet cordial; out of the usual rut, but without being affected or strained; with a certain quaint humor that took the fancy of the rough as well as the orderly portion of the assembly; there was a general movement in the direction of the bar. And not the least pleased of the lot, Billy Bradley deftly slung a glittering line of glasses along the polished counter.

A business man, every inch of him, was Billy, and he had heard enough of the "new star" who had flashed across the horizon, to instantly recognize him in this bland-voiced gentleman. As the "latest sensation" he would bring luck to the bar, and gold to its till.

The Nameless Sport seemed bent on "making himself solid" with the citizens as there represented, for he was as free as he was apparently "flush" with gold, though without being at all offensive in his liberality, seeming to take it as a matter of course that he was to "pay his footing" handsomely.

"It was a toss-up with me whether I took root at Glorious Strike, or passed on to 'Way-up,' he said, with a mellow laugh, leaning carelessly against the bar, his thumbs inserted in the arm-holes of his vest, facing the door, though even the most suspicious could hardly have detected the really close watch he was keeping on all who entered the saloon. "And my old good luck stuck right by me, for heads came up and I was booked for this burg. Not in the highest of hopes, to speak the truth, for sundry croakers who think more of their village than they do of the truth, told me that I'd grow blue-moldy before I'd spent twenty-four hours in 'Way-up!'"

"All the world knows that the only glorious part of that strike lies in the name," scornfully uttered one, while a second chimed in:

"Lies hits it right center, pard, an' you could n't say more ef you was to chaw up an' spit out a hull dictionary!"

"I'll never contradict you, friend," laughed the Nameless Sport. "I like it mighty well, as far's I've got; though, perhaps, I could wish for a little less conspicuous first appearance on my own part."

It was a somewhat risky allusion to make, considering the state of affairs in 'Way-up, where scarcely a man but what had arranged himself on one side or the other, favoring Black or standing up for White, as circumstances or self-interest dictated. The Nameless Sport realized this the instant the words passed his lips, even if he had not foreseen as much, by the instant silence which fell over the group.

Cool and self-reliant, he glanced easily from face to face, a half-laugh in his blue eyes. Sooner or later the difficulty must be faced, and he preferred to have the ordeal over with as soon as might be.

"That hits some of you gentlemen on a tender point, I see," he added, in the same mellow, easy tones at which it is so difficult to take offense. "I am sorry; but when you look at it with both eyes, how can it be otherwise? I'm only one man, and mortal. I can't cut myself in halves, to whitewash one and paint the other black. It would be just as hard for me to work on one side to-day, and holler for the other to-morrow, even if you gentlemen would permit such didoes. And as for sitting astride the fence—no, thank you! I care as little for my life as the next man, perhaps, but to set myself up as a target for both parties would be just a thought too much like suicide to fit my constitution."

"Chuck up a dollar an' call the turn!" laughed one of the men.

"Just what I did before setting sail for 'Way-up," was the light response. "White came on top, and White I'm going to write on my card until the game is ended or my checks run out."

"White struck the bottom, I thought," a little maliciously cut in another of the company, who was clearly a Black adherent. "Or was it on the bottom?"

"That was a little mistake, just such as might happen to any one; to you, for instance, my dear fellow," retorted the man without a name, with a bow that emphasized the point.

"An' it wasn't so mighty long afore, that Black turned mighty white, ef Cap Hicks don't lie!" sneered a broad-shouldered man from the outer circle.

"Another little mistake, which I trust will not be brought up by any of my new friends," cut in the Nameless Sport, knowing from experience how little it takes to bring on a row between heads already heated with partisanship, added to whisky. "Although chance placed me on the White side of the fence, I've only kindly feelings for those who train on the other divide, as yet. I think Ishmael Black understands me better than he did when we had that unfortunate dispute, purely through my looking like another man who seems to be in particularly bad odor in 'Way-up just at present."

"So much like him that if the boss wasn't satisfied it's only a resemblance, stranger, I don't reckon you'd need them feet o' yours to hold you upright. They's more'n one rope ready noosed for the neck of Prince Amory!"

"And both black and white hands to do the pulling up!"

"Naturally enough, if he is the thief and forger I've heard him called, but I beg of you don't let my unfortunate likeness draw my head through any of those loops," laughed the Nameless Sport.

Just at that moment George Washington White entered the saloon, closely followed by a number of armed men, who might be there on business of their own, or who might be acting as a sort of body-guard. And from the manner in which a few of the men in the group—particularly those who had spoken on the Black side—slipped out at the earliest opportunity, it was clear that others besides the Nameless Sport entertained this idea.

White looked paler than usual, possibly from contrast with the numerous bit of black court-plaster with which he had covered up the abrasions caused by the spatters of lead from the shot that so effectually "spiked" his revolver a few hours before. And he hesitated a moment as he caught sight of the man without a name, as though he had not counted on meeting him then and there. But as the Unknown bowed to him with careless grace, the mine-owner advanced with extended hand, his manner and voice both a trifle strained and unnatural, as he said:

"I am glad to meet you, sir, if only to apologize for my hasty action of this afternoon. May I introduce myself a little more regularly? My name is White—G. W. White."

"Glad to meet you, Mr. White," bowed the Nameless, without the ghost of a smile, though there was a peculiar twinkle in his big blue eyes.

"And your name is?" hesitated the mine-owner, as the other drew back to resume his former easy position.

"If you could tell me that, I'd be a happy man, my dear sir," soberly returned the sport. "I've spent all my life in hunting for a name which I could rightfully freeze onto, but as yet I've missed it. To-day my hopes began to revive, when everybody I run up against began plastering me all over with Prince Somebody-or-other, but I quickly found out that my constitution wouldn't stand it! There was a fight hitched onto the name, every time, you see, and though the man never drew the breath of life that loves fun more than I, it began to grow too mighty funny when slip-nooses and hangman's knots shaded the sun! And so—call me any name you please, just so you leave out that blessed edict."

"If you knew how closely you resemble the real Prince Amory, you wouldn't wonder at the mistake I fell into."

"That is wiped out and forgotten, my dear sir. You came out of it right end up, and so did I—thanks to your wretched marksmanship."

"And yet—you must pardon me if there still lingers a doubt," added White, with a little more energy in his tones, as he drew back a trifle, just enough to permit a lithe, slender figure to slip past his side and confront the Nameless Sport, gazing steadily, keenly into his handsome face with eyes that seemed filled with a lurid fire.

"Which you bring this gentleman to solve?" coldly uttered the man without a name, a hard light coming into his eyes, his jaws seeming to square themselves, though he did not in the least degree alter his easy position with his back against the bar.

"For your sake quite as much as mine," was the hasty reply. "Your life is not safe a minute while even the ghost of a doubt lingers in the minds of those who have suffered so deeply by the crimes of that infernal scoundrel whose face you bear."

"And suppose this fellow should decide that I am the criminal?"

"Salt won't save you!" was the grim retort.

"Then, my fine fellow," drawled the Nameless, turning his blue eyes once more upon those blazing black orbs, "take your time while you're about it. Since your say-so is to settle the matter, let us pray that nobody has been stuffing your pockets with filthy lucre to insure a necktie festival!"

Red Turner—for it was he—paid not the slightest attention to this uncomplimentary hint, but gazed keenly, searching into the face of the man whom, at first glance, he also had decided was Prince Amory. Unlike the rest, how-

ever, he had the nerve and coolness to first make certain his impression was a correct one. And now, with a long breath, he turned his face toward White, saying positively:

"You're off the trail, jedge. This ain't the man."

"You are dead sure, Turner?" demanded White, with a frown.

Now that he had the advantage, he rather hoped that this would prove to be the supposed runaway. If he was, and would listen to reason rather than suffer hanging, something might be done with him to turn the scale of victory to his side.

"He's still livin', ain't he?" was the grim response.

"But how can you be so positive?" persisted White, uneasily.

"The face is mighty like that one," slowly uttered Turner, "but not so much when you come to look at it cluss. That might be by the black ha'r an' the baird, but I don't go by them alone. Prince Amory, ef he's alive, kerries a mark that time nur art couldn't wipe out or kiver over so as to fool me. This ain't Prince Amory."

"Sold ag'in!" cried the Nameless Sport, rising and leaning forward to grasp the little man by the shoulder and turn him around. "I was beginnin' to grow creepy, my man! This infernal question of Prince or no Prince, is growing gritty between my teeth, and though you're rather smaller than I am, you look like a tough colt to curry. I was hoping you might step on my corns, to give me an excuse for laying you out. Not that I have any particular grudge against you, as a man, but I see I've got to have a signboard to set up as a public warning: No Princes on this location!"

Red Turner coldly waited until the voluble tongue had had its say, then his thin forefinger rose and quivered before the handsome face, emphasizing the words that came hard and stern:

"I say you ain't Prince Amory, an' I say it's monstrous lucky fer you that sech is the case. But mark this down in your mind: Don't you creep too nigh me without fu'st hollerin' out your name, or you mebbe'll die fer Prince Amory, to pay fer wearin' his face, his form, his voice!"

With a quick twist Red Turner slipped from under that grasp, and without a word, without a look to the right or left, passed out of the door and into the night, brushing against a broad-shouldered man who was just entering the saloon, his face excited, his eyes glowing.

He opened his mouth as though to address White, but paused as he saw the latter step forward with extended hand, saying hastily:

"Once more, sir, I ask you to take my hand, this time without even the slightest reservation. I admit that I deserve to be refused, from your standpoint, but when you come to learn all—to realiz' how extraordinarily you—"

"I'd shake with an untamed tiger if refusal meant to listen once to that threadbare story!" interposed the Nameless Sport, with a wry grimace. "If you love me, White, never so much as breathe that name or hint at that abominable likeness within a mile of yours truly!"

"I say, boss!" broke in the man, shuffling forward, speaking eage ly. "Is this gent a fri'nd o' yours?"

"From this time on, yes! What do you mean, Mallet-foot?"

"That the quicker he gits his tools ready, the better fer him!"

## CHAPTER XI.

### SATISFACTION BY PROXY.

"SOMEBODY else with the princely humbug buzzing in their bonnets, eh?" asked the Nameless Sport, his red lips curling and his blue eyes kindling afresh. "Friends of yours, may I ask, dear Mallet-foot?"

There was no immediate response, the eager eyes of the broad-shouldered man roving swiftly over the faces in the saloon, as though singling out friend from foe.

"If they are," added the man without a name, his voice growing just a thought harder and colder, "the most friendly turn you can show 'em is to hunt a bullet-proof hole behind the bar and begin writing out their various obituaries off-hand. I'm too old to run, too frightened to beg, and altogether too democratic to go up a tree after a rope just for the honor of being called a prince!"

"What's gone wrong, Hennepin?" demanded White, sharply.

"Some o' the Black gang gittin' up on thar hind legs an' howlin' fer gore, boss," was the prompt response. "Two-story Johnson's at the head of 'em, o' course, smashin' his teeth an' sw'arin' as how he'll git even-up with this gent ef it takes a hind leg!"

"The worthy Johnson seems to be partial to hind legs," dryly observed the Nameless Sport.

White's body-guard broke into a laugh at this neat touch, as they regarded it, but there were a few sober faces to be seen, principally among those in the gambling department beyond. Several of the players who carried these, rose

from their seats and came forward as though to leave the place, but at a sign from the broad-shouldered fellow known as Mallet-foot, the body-guard quietly moved so as to obstruct the passage quite effectually, yet without avowing that intention.

"Two-story won't count on quite as big a bunch as we be, boss, ef word ain't tooted to him by some o' them slinkers," Hennepin hurriedly whispered. "He's got his heelers, o' curse, but we kin double 'em up from the word jump! It's got to be some time, an' why not right now? The lads is all ready an' eager fer a job. We kin sweep the chaff clean to never-come-back-ag'in! An' so we will, ef you only say the word, boss!"

White hesitated, but it was only for an instant. Then he spoke out clear and distinct, honesty seeming to distill from every pore:

"We will stick firmly by the rule that has been our guide ever since this unfortunate trouble first arose, my friend. We will continue to act strictly on the defensive. We will close our ears to the vulgar taunts and jeers of the misguided ones. We will patiently bear all the insults the party in the wrong cares to fling at us, strong to bear and long to endure in the consciousness of our innocence and perfect freedom from wrong-doing. But when they crowd us too hard—when patience ceases to be a virtue and becomes a cowardice—then strike, and see that every shot, every blow, every stroke goes home—and sends one of the misguided wretches home before it!"

The speech, on the whole, was a success, though the forbearing portion of it drew rather glum looks from the body-guard. Mallet-foot Hennepin in particular seemed dissatisfied, still eying the Black adherents who paused irresolutely under the archway which divided the saloon proper from the gambling portion of the establishment.

"They ain't no need to send them critters out to tell Two-story to double teams onto us, I reckon," he muttered, sourly.

"You ain't exactly in love with this elongated Johnson, then?" softly asked the Nameless Sport, a peculiar light flashing into his blue eyes. "Yet there are some men in town who are ready to back him against any two white warriors who can be hired to face him."

"You ain't one o' them men, be ye?" snapped Mallet-foot, showing his teeth wolfishly.

"Not a bit of it, my dear fellow! I'm backin' the other horse, although I had to go it blind, not having having had the pleasure of meeting you before. But now— Well, I've got a few ducats that says I know one man in 'Way-up that can double Two-story up and tie him neck and heels together, without turning a hair."

A little bow pointed the remark, and Mallet-foot Hennepin no longer frowned. For years he had been a rival of Johnson's, and when the split occurred in the mining firm, and Two-story stuck to the fortunes of Ishmael Black, he naturally took the opposite tack, with such vigor and good-will that he was almost immediately recognized as the active leader of the White faction, just as Johnson filled that place on the other side.

As though satisfied he had made his point, whatever that might be, the Nameless Sport turned toward White, speaking distinctly:

"If Johnson is looking for m', the sooner he learns where I am to be found the quicker he'll hunt his hole. He don't want to get even, only in the minds of those who listen to his empty blowing. If any one was to carry him word that I was waiting for him, the stomach-ache would double him up so quick and completely that his nose would split his shins wide open before his best friend could slip a buffer in between. Pah! the idea puts a bitter taste in my mouth. Barkkeeper, will you sling 'em around just for luck? And you, gentlemen?"

There was the briefest possible hesitation among the men who acted as a guard over the door, but a signal from White drew them away; an opportunity which the few Black men did not fail to take immediate advantage of.

Careless though he seemed, the Nameless Sport did not miss this action, and a low, mellow laugh parted his lips as he held up his glass of amber liquid where the light could strike through it, saying:

"And the news goes forth to Johnson, hot-foot! So much the better for the whole of us! Either we have a hearty laugh over the crawfish act of the human tapeworm, or we'll have a little circus of our own, right at home."

"To end in a general riot, I'm afraid!" muttered White, uneasily.

"To which it's bound to come, soon or later, unless you prefer to make a clean back-down," bluntly declared the Unknown. "You must have foreseen this when the split first took place, or else you're a far less keen-sighted man than I took you for."

Fortunately perhaps for White himself, before he could give an answer to this blunt speech, there came a series of cries from the outsider, rapidly drawing nearer the saloon.

"Gentlemen, if this is Two-story Johnson in search of me, I beg of you not to chip in unless he turns loose a whole pack at me," quick-

ly asked the Nameless Sport, as he emptied his untouched liquor on the floor and resumed his easy attitude with back and elbows resting on or against the counter, facing the door.

White drew to one side, his fat face turning several shades paler, despite the strength of his body-guard. They, too, felt aside from the man without a name, apparently quite willing to let him bear the first brunt of the collision which one and all felt sure was on the way.

They were not kept long in suspense. The swinging screen was rudely kicked open, and Two-story Johnson stood on the threshold, scowling ugly into the lighted room.

"Don't be bashful, Johnson," blandly called out the Nameless Sport, without altering his careless position in the least. "Come in, Johnson. It warms the inmost recesses of my heart to see you right end up once more, Johnson, although, come to take a second look, you are bilious yet, Johnson! Hope you won't have another fit like the couple—"

"Look yer, ye limber-clapper'd critter!" gruffly interposed the gangling giant, shaking his bony right hand in the air, holding the other so that all could see it was unarmed. "I'm under orders from Boss Black not to shoot or cut with you, unless you fu'st draw weepo on me. He's my boss, an' I cain't go back on what he says, but it sticks in my crap most rough!"

"As good an excuse as another, Johnson," laughed the Nameless.

Blacker scowled the giant as he stepped forward, still keeping his hands from his weapons. Behind him came grim, armed men, and over their heads could be caught indistinct glimpses of more of the same quality.

"The Boss says they's too much at stake fer to resk all on the wrongs of jest one man. He says that while he's ready fer to fight the enemy to death, ef they open the muss, none o' his men kin take the resk o' pickin' the row. Ef it wasn't fer that, comin' from my boss, I'd be talkin' to ye over a gun or at the p'nt of a bowie!"

"A tongue is a much less risky weapon, Johnson, as you say," retorted the sport, with a provoking smile.

"You played me dirt to-day, with your circus tricks," persisted the giant, now almost within arm's length of the man without a name, who had not shifted his careless attitude in the least. "I cain't kill you, as long as the boss sticks to his line marked out, but all the same I've got to git even or bu'st!"

"Let it be get even, Johnson, for the sake of our poor nostrils!"

"All right! Kick fer kick, durn ye!" snarled the giant as he made a savage thrust with his huge foot, intending to catch the Nameless Sport in his middle; a feat that seemed easy of accomplishment, thanks to the careless and defenseless attitude still maintained by the man without a name.

But even a "sure thing" is not always to be depended upon, and for the third time Two-story Johnson came to grief most signally. His aim was all right, but when his foot got there, the Nameless Spcrt was off to one side, laughing mockingly at the howl of mingled pain and fury that broke from the gangling giant as the bar received the full force of his vicious kick. And then, as he staggered back on one leg, Johnson felt his other ankle caught in a grip of steel.

Active as a panther, the Nameless Sport took the offensive, laughing in the face of his adversary as he pressed nearer, pushing that tingling foot higher and higher with a strength that would not be denied, until the cursing wretch fell heavily on the broad of his back.

Not laughing was the Nameless Sport as he leaped forward and rested one foot on the quivering bosom of his fallen foe, a brace of business-like weapons covering the excited group of Blackites in and around the entrance. Sharp and distinct his tones as he cried:

"Keep your clothes on, gentlemen, unless you are just yearning to solve the secrets of immortality! This is a private game between Johnson and me, and I reckon we can get through with it unaided."

"Don't you worry, pard," grimly chuckled Mallet-foot Hennepin, with a nod toward his own men. "We're here to see fair play, an' we'll keep the peace ef we hev to fight fer it. Eh, lads?"

The response was prompt and emphatic enough. The White party was ready, if not anxious for the test to come, and the other gang rather shrunk from it, feeling themselves overmatched just then.

"Don't strike first, men!" cried White, his oily voice just a little unsteady, despite the favorable nature of the case. "Remember, we are acting solely on the defensive! If they begin it, then our hands are free and our conscience clear."

"Stay put, Johnson!" sharply uttered the Nameless Sport, bearing more heavily on the chest of the giant, who was beginning to writhe and struggle to free himself. "Don't make me spoil the looks of the floor. I'd hate to do it, but for your own sake I'll have to if you try to slip knife or burn powder. Remember your

promise to Boss Black. Would you perjure yourself, Johnson? For shame!"

"You devil!" panted the downfallen giant.

"You gentleman? and that's two lies, Johnson," laughed the man without a name as his weapons vanished from view. "I've got to draw your teeth, Johnson, to keep you from temptation," he added, stooping and disarming his adversary with deft touches, tossing the tools over the bar out of immediate reach, then straightening up again, but without removing his foot from the breast of the giant.

"Johnson, it pains me to use such plain language, but you're fast making an infernal nuisance of yourself. Three several times you have tried to down me, and three times you've gone down yourself. Three times is out, you know, according to law."

"Let up, cuss ye!"

"Cuss not, Johnson, or you'll never get a bite. Lie quietly and repent of your manifold sins, for I reckon your time has come. You take up too much room in this crowded sphere, Johnson. If you were only content to stand up quietly in a corner, it wouldn't be quite so bad, but you will insist on sloshing around, shading the sun and putting honest people out generally, and out of temper especially. In short, you're a nuisance, Johnson, and must be abated in some way, shape or manner. All that bothers me now is just which way to take!"

"Let me up, an' I'll fight you naked hand to your weapons, cuss ye!" snarled the infuriated giant.

"Why, you miserable wretch! you couldn't fight me if I was dead drunk, fast asleep, and with my hands tied with an inch rope!" contemptuously cried the Nameless Sport, his red lips curling.

"I say, boss," eagerly interposed Mallet-foot Hennepin, starting forward, his face lit up with a sudden inspiration. "Ef the overgrown critter is sp'ilin' fer a fight, I'll let him tackle me, an' pay him big wages in the barg'in!"

"What do you say to that offer, Johnson?" asked the Nameless Sport, with a light laugh, in startling contrast to his air an instant before.

"It's you I want, cuss ye! It's your heart's blood that'll satisfy me, an' nothin' shorter!" grated the giant, viciously.

Mallet-foot gave a snort of contemptuous disgust.

"You wouldn't fight a sick kitten, unless yo could ketch it asleep in the dark, Two-story Johnson! I've rubbed dirt in your face every time we've met fer the last year, an' you tuck it like a hog! Thar ain't a drap o' man's blood in your veins, an' nobody knows it better than the decent lads that trains under your banner! Fight me, or go putt on petticoats! Don't claim a title that you're skeered to back up!"

"Him fu'st, durn ye!" grated Johnson, making a desperate effort to free himself, and succeeding, thanks to the stepping back of his thrice conqueror, who cried with a cold smile:

"Johnson, you want another lesson, I see, before you realize your proper class. Are your eyes open, Johnson?"

With a savage howl of deadly fury, the giant plunged forward with arms outstretched and bony fingers quivering, feeling that if he once succeeded in clutching this laughing demon, he could easily crush the life out of him.

"Oh, Johnson, don't!" laughed the Nameless Sport, springing lightly aside, but making no effort to touch a weapon, or even to close his white hands. "You're making even your best friends laugh at your clumsiness, Johnson. They're actually weeping tears of shame and mortification by the gallon—come to my arms, sweetheart!"

The giant made another furious onset, but this time the Nameless Sport did not attempt to elude him as before. Instead, he leaped forward and directly into those brawny arms, his own shapely members closing about the panting chest of the Blackite.

One tremendous hug that seemed to instantly take all strength and power out of the giant, then a quick sway and a mighty heave. Two story Johnson was lifted clear of the floor, whirled over until he rested at right angles across the shoulder of his adversary, helplessly at his mercy. A swift shiver ran through the amazed crowd, as they looked to see the wretch dashed to the floor to meet with a broken neck.

Instead, the Nameless Sport bent and lightly dropped his adversary on the flat of his back, stepping back with folded arms, showing not the slightest trace of his really tremendous exertions in wind or face.

"That's lesson number one, Johnson," he said, easily, a bland smile on his handsome face as he looked down upon the bewildered giant. "As soon as you can catch breath again, get up and I'll down you after still another style. I never leave a job half finished, and I'll argue with you until the cocks begin to crow for breakfast, if your wind and obstinacy hold out, unless you come to the conclusion that it'd pay you better wages to beg'n nearer the foot and work your way toward the top. I'll handle you as tenderly as may be, Johnson, but that proud spirit of yours has got to grow humble before I dismiss school."

"Give me back my tools an' I'll fight you with them!" panted the giant, staggering to his feet, only to be pushed back again by a ready foot, as the Nameless Sport coldly uttered:

"Don't be an ass, Johnson! I don't want to kill you just yet. I'd have to do it, though, if you insisted on burning powder."

"Kill me or I'll kill you, cuss ye!"

"Look here, you idiot," sharply uttered the Nameless Sport, leaning forward until their glowing eyes fairly met each other. "I've been playing with you thus far, simply because I'm tired of letting blood without anything to gain by it on my side. I don't want to fight you. I don't want to fight any man. I won't fight, unless I'm crowded into it, as you're trying to crowd me. But if I am crowded—look out you! I'll kill you so sure as there's a sun in the heavens at noonday!"

"I ax it—I mark you as a coward ef you don't fight me!"

"You will have it, Johnson?" with a sudden resumption of his old carelessness. "All right. I'll fight you, on one condition."

"Name it, in a hurry!" growled Two-story Johnson as he scrambled to his feet again, his gaunt face convulsed with bitter hatred.

"That you first give this gentleman satisfaction," bowed the man without a name, turning and tapping Mallet-foot Hennepin on the arm. "I don't want to cheat him out of his grudge, and I can kill you just as well after he has whipped you."

"Ef I don't take the job off o' your han's, boss!" grinned the White henchman, evidently hugely delighted with this unexpected turn of affairs.

"I'll keep an eye open for that, my friend," was the cool retort, as the Nameless Sport turned again to the perplexed giant. "What do you say to the condition, Johnson?"

"I don't love him, by no manner o' means, but I hate you ten thousan' times wuss!" was the grating reply. "I want to git even with you afore I take him up!"

"You may grow weary waiting for him to follow after, Johnson," with a cold smile.

"Look here: I'll give you your first dose of satisfaction by proxy. Mallet-foot will take my place, and fight you with natural weapons, fair stand up or rough-and-tumble, just as you elect. If you whip him, I'll call you man enough for me to meet on your own terms. I say your own terms, for he may dim your eyesight a little before you succeed in polishing him off, and I don't want to take any advantage of you. If you decline—well, you can play your best to get even, but I promise to plaster you all over with shame so thick that what you've this far received will be no more than a coating of thinnest gauze! Make your election, Johnson!"

"I'mbettin' two to one he'll hunt his hole!" cried out Mallet-foot, swinging a healthy-looking buckskin pouch in the air.

"Two to one's a good bet, even if I do lose," laughed the Nameless Sport, tossing a jingling pouch over the counter to the barkeeper, with the addition: "Cover his lay-out, will you, Billy, and oblige?"

"But, durn it all!" spluttered Mallet-foot, taken all aback. "I wasn't chuckin' it at you, pard!"

"Business is business, Hennepin, and I never permit social sentiments to interfere when I see a good thing floating within reach. Of course Johnson won't hunt his hole just to keep me from making a stake. I know some fellows would, but he's not that caliber. Eh, Johnson?"

Despite his intense hatred, this sublime impudence drew the ghost of a smile to the gaunt face of the giant.

"I'll fight him, fer the chainte o' gittin' a good even whack at you," he growled, surlily.

"I knew you would, Johnson," blandly smiled the man without a name as he patted the tall man on the shoulder patronizingly. "It isn't often that I mistake a dunghill for a game-cock, and I recognized your breed the instant I caught your first note."

Two-story Johnson drew back a little with a surly growl. He distinctly recalled how he had some hours earlier in the day been branded by that same smooth voice as a dunghill, and the seeming compliment to his suspicious ears carried an irritating sting with it.

"Nough chinnin'. Git down to business, ef ye mean business!" he growled, with a venomous glance toward Mallet-foot, who was slowly turning toward the bar, pouch in hand. "The quicker I make him squeel, the sooner I kin git back at you!"

"Isn't he a dandy war-hoss?" enthusiastically cried the Nameless Sport, his head cocked on one side as he ran his eyes up and down the elongated specimen of humanity. "White, I'm sorry for your champion—I am, really! You'll have to do your level best to bring him up to the scratch in fine fettle, or he's a gone 'coon!"

"I'll have nothing to do with the nasty business!" impatiently cried the mine-owner, uttering disgust in every feature. "It's all your doings, sir! Get through with it as best you can. I'm going—"

"To stand up for your man, of course," interposed the sport, with just a thought of harshness in his voice. "You can't do less than that, and

nobody asks you to do more. To refuse would be an insult to Mallet-foot, to my principal, and to me."

"There'll be an infernal row over it, I know!" growled White, but showing that he preferred running that risk to going flatly in the face of that hint.

"Not in here I trust, gentlemen," broke in Bradley, his face white but resolute. "There's a good moon, and plenty of room outside, with less valuable fixtures to damage. I don't want to spoil sport, but you can't fight under my roof without counting me in with a lone hand."

A side motion of his curly head called attention to a brace of heavy revolvers and a double-barreled shotgun close at hand, and with a light laugh the Nameless Sport responded for the company:

"We might argue with you, Billy, but we pass out when you sling scatter guns at us! I reckon we'd rather have our fun on the outside, anyway; it isn't so crowded, and much less suggestive of sudden death from buckshot fever! Come along, Johnson! White, bring your duck-leg out to slaughter, will you? My Shanghai chicken is trimmed and heeled, just spoiling for a fly!"

"It's his feathers as 'll fly, when I gits my gaffs to playin' on his karkidge!" chuckled Mallet-foot, turning to the reluctant White.

"Out and make a ring, lads!" cried the man without a name. "White, we trust to your honor to see that your man leaves his weapons behind, as my man has left his. Remember, this is to be a fair fight with the tools of nature alone. I'll drop the first one that tries to use anything else, although he be my own brother!"

Eager enough to witness the sport between two such bitter yet oddly-matched rivals, for the time being forgetting the feud which had arrayed them on opposite sides, the crowd immediately flocked to the open air, instinctively selecting an unoccupied patch of land a little off the street, where there was nothing to obstruct the clear rays of the nearly full moon.

The Nameless Sport quickly stripped his man for the fray, showing the cool and practical hand in all that he did, his nimble tongue running cheerily, humorously, as though he asked for nothing better in this world than just what was falling to his lot.

Fortunately Mallet-foot Hennepin was no novice, and therefore required but little care on the part of his reluctant second. He stripped to the waist, and was the first man to step inside the ring.

"Go in, Johnson, and remember that if you don't whip, you'll never get a chance to down me, unless from under cover!" cried out the Nameless Sport, turning his champion loose.

There was slight pretense at science. Both men hated each other too viciously for that. They came together, striking wildly, then clinched and struggled desperately for the fall, amid the eager cries of the excited spectators. But neither White nor the Nameless Sport were to be heard.

The latter scarce gave the combatants a second glance, for he felt a far deeper interest in the actions of George Washington White, whose uneasy movements apparently had awakened his curiosity. And when, almost before the two men came together, the mine-owner most ingloriously deserted his principal, turning and stealing rapidly away, the man without a name imitated the action, unnoticed amid the growing confusion.

Not ten minutes later a sudden outburst came to his ears, and he paused, with a curious smile on his face, his blue eyes aglow, muttering:

"Go it, ye cripples! It had to come sooner or later, and there's no time better than right now, ye cats of Kilkenny!"

## CHAPTER XII.

### ON A BUSINESS BASIS.

"THIS is comfortable, if not exactly gorgeous, Mr. Black," said Adam Fanshaw, glancing quickly around the rather contracted quarters into which the mine-owner introduced him.

"Your private office, I presume?"

Ishmael Black placed the kerosene lamp with its smoky chimney and general greasiness on the little round table, at the same time pushing a chair with a crippled back toward his companion with his foot, reserving another without any back at all for his own accommodation.

"Private enough, I reckon," he said, coldly, noticing the slight but peculiar emphasis which Adam Fanshaw placed on that word. "There's not many hiding-places in the shanty, as you can see for yourself. And then I'm hardly a man to be spied upon."

A rat could hardly have found concealment in the room, but Adam Fanshaw slowly glanced around as though bound to make sure. There were no articles of furniture save those already alluded to. Floor, walls, and ceiling were bare. There was but one door, through which they had entered, and a single window, over which a heavy, tight wooden shutter was hung from the outside.

"The sides seem precious thin and leaky, though," he muttered, with a short, nervous laugh. "One might almost as well be talking in the open air."

"You objected to any room at the hotel. This is the best I can offer. If it don't please you there's no compulsion. You sought the interview, not I. You can end it just as quickly as you see fit," coldly uttered the mine-owner.

Adam Fanshaw seemed a little taken aback by this blunt reception. Or, was it only seeming? Now that he was out of the presence of Mrs. Prince Amory, he looked like a man who might easily push his way over any and all obstacles to the end he had mapped out.

"As for me," added Ishmael Black, with an increase of coldness, "I have nothing to hide from the light of day or from the ears of my fellow-men."

"And I'm an angel of light, with wings strapped down to my back, the better to wear mortal clothing," laughed Adam Fanshaw, with an entire change of manner. "My solicitude was altogether on your account, my dear sir. We have nothing to conceal. We have the papers in plain black and white to substantiate all our claims, and—"

"What is it you're driving at?" sharply interposed Black, his dark eyes filling with a reddish light as he leaned across the table.

"Simply proving to you that I'm able and willing to meet you on whatever plane you prefer to occupy," was the light response, and Adam Fanshaw leaned gingerly back against the creaking support, one fat white hand waving easily in the dim light, a bland smile playing over his expansive countenance.

"Then come down to plain business, will you?" snapped Black.

"With the greatest of pleasure," and Adam Fanshaw leaned over the table after the fashion set him by the mine-owner. "Business brought us here, and business made me beg this private interview with you. Private, because we find matters unpleasantly complicated, and with you because we have concluded that you are really entitled to the first offer on our part."

"May I ask just what or whom you mean by *we*?"

"My client and myself," was the prompt response.

"You mean the wife of Prince Amory?"

"I mean the widow of Prince Amory, asking pardon for correction, of course," smoothly responded Adam Fanshaw.

Through his half-closed eyes the man of business was keenly watching the dark face of his opposite as he uttered these words, but if he anticipated making any discovery of importance, he was doomed to disappointment.

The black eyes opened wider, and the jetty brows arched themselves in surprise, but that was all. If Ishmael Black was privy to the murder of Prince Amory, he gave no signs of his guilt.

"The infernal scoundrel is not dead, if you mean the same Prince Amory that was once my partner: the thief who stole my money; the cur who forged the firm's name for more money than he would fetch if his dirty carcass was turned to pure gold!"

"And who left behind him tenfold the amount he is charged with carrying off—to complete your statement," bowed Adam Fanshaw, with a degree of boldness that one who had only known him as he had figured in that little affair at the barricade would hardly give him credit for. "I mean that same gentleman, my dear sir."

"And you think to play a game of this sort on me?" laughed Black, his thin lips curling with scorn. "In the first place, I deny that the fellow is dead."

"Which we just as positively assert, on reliable information. Not to make a secret of it—for rather than get mixed up in a row with you, Black, we're open to a compromise—we are in possession of positive proof that Prince Amory is dead. If necessary we are prepared to prove this fact. If forced to do so, we are even ready to prove just when, where, and by what means he came by his death."

Ishmael Black stared keenly into the face of his opposite while these crisp sentences were dropping from his lips. He was still suspicious of a trap underlying those smooth words. He felt that the man was lying flatly when that preposterous assertion was first made, but now he began to doubt. Surely the man never lived who could lie to him so boldly without being detected? And a man would be worse than a fool to make such a positive assertion, unless he had proof sufficient to carry him out in case the test was applied? And he was already willing to admit that, whatever else he might be, Adam Fanshaw was no fool.

If Prince Amory was indeed dead, how came he to meet his fate? And then a revelation seemed to come upon him.

"How long has the rascal been a dead man?" he asked, abruptly.

"Quite long enough to turn his wife into a widow," retorted Adam Fanshaw, with a smile and a little bow.

"If Prince Amory is dead; if he came to his death by other than natural means, or was killed within a hundred miles of this place, then you have come to the wrong man, my friend," deliberately uttered the mine-owner, his black eyes glittering vividly. "You should have

tackled George White. And I'd have give half my interest in the 'Way-up Mine to be where I could have a good, square look at his fat face when you unmasked that battery on him!"

Adam Fanshaw shrugged his shoulders and pursed up his full lips, a deep wrinkle briefly marring the smoothness of his forehead.

"Precisely what I told my client, after taking a fair look at you two gentlemen," he declared, adding quickly: "As a man of business, you understand, my dear sir! I told her that we could wind Mr. White around our finger without more than half-trying. I told her that you would prove stiff as iron and springy as steel, unless we happened to catch you in just the right humor for coming to terms. But she said no matter; you were the right man to tackle, or words to the effect."

"She sent you to interview me, then?" slowly asked Ishmael Black, a faint trace of color coming into his sallow cheeks.

"Of course; I am simply acting as her agent in this matter."

"And as her agent, you are prepared to make—what sort of terms? What is your little game, anyway? To be recognized as the wife or widow of Prince Amory?"

"Widow, my dear fellow," blandly bowed Adam Fanshaw.

"Suppose that point is conceded; how will it benefit you?"

Adam Fanshaw did not reply at once, but sat gazing steadily into the sallow face of the mine-owner. He seemed to be debating how far it might be advisable to show his hand at that stage of the game. Whether it would be wise or unwise to at once come to the point.

Ishmael Black so interpreted his silence, and cast out one bony hand with careless impatience, his voice hard and cold as he added:

"Answer or not, just as it suits you. You sought the interview, not I. But my time is too valuable to be wasted in idle talk. If you mean business, I'll meet you on a business basis. If you are only talking for the sake of hearing your own voice, you'll have to excuse me!"

"We have nothing to conceal, my dear sir," smiled Fanshaw, with a sudden briskness. "I'll give you a glimpse at our cards, and then leave you to say whether or no I am to pay a visit to Mr. White."

"Out with it, then!"

"First, we claim, and are prepared to prove, that Prince Amory has been made way with by foul means. Second, that even if we admit that he got away with all the booty he is charged with—"

"Go slow, Mr. Fanshaw!" sternly interrupted Ishmael Black, his eyes flashing, his voice hard and grating.

"I am throwing out no insinuations of foul play or false charges against *you*, my dear sir," quietly retorted Fanshaw, unflinchingly meeting that fiery gaze. "The fact of my openly saying so much, should be proof sufficient to convince you that we are not charging you with either."

"You mean to hint that George White—"

"I never hint. I am talking to you, my dear sir, and not to George White. If you please, I will resume at the point where I left off."

"It's your turn now; go ahead!" muttered Black, half-sulkily.

"Granting every item charged against Prince Amory, we claim that the property he left behind him here in 'Way-up, is sufficient to satisfy each charge, and then sum up a fortune. To prove it—how much ready cash are you willing to take for your one-third interest in the single mine bearing the same name as this town?"

"Slow, distinct, each word dropped from his lips, the speaker keenly watching the sallow face opposite. And despite his almost iron nerve, Ishmael Black could not entirely hide his annoyance, although he put a bold front on and exclaimed harshly:

"Ten times its real value! Twenty times what I would gladly have taken before George White showed himself such a snarling cur! Thanks to him, my share of the 'Way-up Mine is not for sale!"

"Which falling out took place just about the time the lost vein was discovered, I believe?"

A grating curse broke from the lips of the mine-owner, and for an instant he seemed on the point of leaping over the table at the throat of the man who so coolly asked this question. But quick as thought Adam Fanshaw held a cocked derringer in his hand, the muzzle covering his man, and a glow in his eyes that enforced his stern command:

"Keep your seat, Ishmael Black! I don't want to hurt you, but I am still less willing to get hurt."

The mine-owner resumed his seat, all emotion vanishing from his face, while his tones were cold and even as he responded:

"It isn't your gun, Fanshaw, that sends me back, one-half as much as your nerve and quickness. I took you for a pompous fool and ass combined, for which mistake I now beg your pardon."

"Which is granted, my dear sir, as frankly as asked," laughed Adam Fanshaw, his fat hand dropping to the table, but still retaining the weapon. "If you pledge me your word that

you'll not attempt to turn the tables on me by unmasking your armory—battery, I should say—I'll put up this little persuader of mine."

"I never pull on a man except to shoot," dryly retorted Black, with just the ghost of a sneer and smile combined. "I begin to see that you can be put to better use than killing. Put away your tool, or keep it where you have it, just as suits you best. I'm too old a dog to run away at the mere glimpse of a bared tooth."

Adam Fanshaw returned the derringer to its hiding-place, resuming as though no interruption had taken place:

"That is why I claim that the widow of Prince Amory, even after squaring the accounts of her late husband, will have a pretty neat little fortune left."

"Granting that your information concerning the re-discovery of the broken vein is correct, you mean," bowed Black.

"That, of course. We could file our claim openly, and permit the courts to pass on it, but that would take time and money. Of course we will have to take that road if you and Mr. White both prove difficult to deal with."

"What is the other course you have in view?"

"To buy either you or White out, and then, with a controlling interest in the claim, to squeeze the owner of the other third so hard that he'll be glad to get out of the press on almost any terms," Adam Fanshaw unblushingly responded.

Black shrugged his shoulders significantly.

"You think you can buy what is not for sale? You must be pretty well heeled, my dear fellow!"

"There's money enough behind us, if that is what you mean by being heeled. I am authorized to make you a liberal offer, which—"

"Our ideas of liberality may widely differ. And not only that, but my share in the 'Way-up is not for sale."

"I'm sorry, both for your sake and for that of my client."

"What do you mean by that?" sharply asked Black.

"That if you won't sell, I must buy White out. I believe I gave you a hint as to what the remaining partner would have to experience?"

"That for my part; now for the other side. Why for *her* sake?"

Adam Fanshaw pursed his lips and shook his head gravely.

"I said more than I had any right to let drop."

"What do you mean, I ask you once more? Bah!" with a short, hard laugh, his thin lips curling. "Do you take me for a fool? You don't let words drop so carelessly. You had a motive in coupling her name with mine, and you are only fencing now. Out with it!"

"On my honor as a business man, Black, I'm in earnest. I meant what I said, but I pledge you my word that I have only my own authority for what you ask me to say."

"What is it?" persisted the mine-owner, his face flushing slightly.

"First, it would be a pity to force her to enter into partnership with a man whom she instinctively abhors, when she has already taken a fancy to you."

"Touch lightly on that, my friend!" warningly muttered Black.

"I'd not touch it at all, but you obliged me to do so," was the tart retort. "I say that Mrs. Amory would much prefer you as a partner, though that is not saying so very much, seeing how she dislikes White, whom—in confidence—she knows had a finger in putting her husband out of the way."

"Whom she deeply mourns, of course?"

"Whom she is glad to get rid of at such handsome figures," Adam Fanshaw admitted without hesitation. "They never agreed, and hardly spent the honeymoon together. But I've no right to say so much."

"She is to be the partner, then?"

"Actually, if not openly. That is one reason why I said so much the more pity for you," was the frank reply. "Mrs. A. is a fine woman, and it might turn out a mighty good thing for you, if you played your cards right."

The instant the words crossed his lips, Adam Fanshaw saw that he had made a serious mistake in uttering them at that early stage of the game. Ishmael Black was nobody's fool, and he drew back with sudden coldness, through which peeped a sneer as he asked:

"Is that hint a part of the instructions Mrs. Amory gave you?"

"You do her an injustice in even hinting at such a thing, Mr. Black," gravely, almost sternly uttered Fanshaw, covering his slip as best he could on the spur of the moment. "I was wrong in saying as much, but now I have said it, I'll stick to it. Mrs. Amory is a lady, born and bred. She is a fine woman, mentally as well as physically. She is a widow, a woman, and therefore to be won by the right man, if he goes at it in the right fashion."

"And you think that I might prove to be that man?" slowly asked the mine-owner, his suspicions growing less before that speech.

"That is for you to find out," retorted Fanshaw more easily. "I only say that if I had the

same chance, I'd be strongly tempted to try my luck, anyway!"

"Why don't you, then?"

"And commit bigamy should the lady take me at my word?" laughed the lawyer, lightly lying. "My wife would kick up a bobbery!"

Ishmael Black tossed back his long black hair with an impatient gesture as though throwing off the thoughts awakened by this unexpected change in the conversation, saying with his old hardness:

"Suppose we leave idle fancies and get back to business. You say that if I don't sell, you'll freeze me out. You saw my wolves back at the barricade, didn't you?"

"And know that you have plenty more of the same litter to add to them, if the occasion arises," was the cool retort, "but the stake is well worth running a little risk, and you'd hardly try to suppress a woman after that fashion, whatever you might do to me. But if you get rid of me another agent will take my place, with a long line to follow after, if needs be. And then, you forget that even in Colorado there is law and order, courts and justice, especially for those who can afford to spend plenty of money in hurrying up the law machinery.

"Now look at it on the other side. You will get out of a pretty bad box in good shape, with money enough to carry you through life as easily as you can wish, and—"

"Either you or I am getting all tangled up, Fanshaw," bluntly interposed Black, with a checking wave of his hand. "If I sell out, how am I to be a partner of Mrs. Amory? If George White remains in, how about her disliking him as a partner? Ain't you getting in a tangle?"

"Shall I clear it away?" laughed Fanshaw, his eyes twinkling. "I might, only you seem to dislike the manner of forming a partnership such as I had in view. Almost any other man would have jumped at the chance, though, after all, it may be but a ghost of one. Mind, I'm only giving you the hint in strict confidence, although I did count on it as one means of bringing you to easier terms."

"Clear as mud!" bluntly interjected the mine-owner.

"Then let fancies go and stick to plain facts. One of you two men has got to get out. The one who goes gets well paid for his share. The one who remains—well, I gave you a hint as to what he may expect."

"Of the two, I picked out White as the man most likely to come to terms, for he's a coward, while you are anything but that. As in duty bound, I reported my conclusion to my client. She refused to be guided by my judgment, saying that while she could pinch a coward like White, she would prefer not trying it on with a man of your caliber. She said for me to learn your terms, and meet them if they were at all within the bounds of reason. If you flatly refused to sell, after learning her full reasons for selecting you, I was to make another proposition."

"And that is?"

"Wait a moment, please," blandly uttered Fanshaw. "I was to add that if you insisted on it, she would enter into a private agreement with you to sell your third back again at the same price, the hour White was frozen out. She agrees to give you a bond to that effect. And I add on my own responsibility that if you accept this bond, you are a great deal less smart man than I take you for, if you don't turn it into a bond of another sort."

"I'm a miserable hand at guessing," half smiled Black. "Will you kindly give that other bond a name?"

"Would it shock you dreadfully if I whispered marriage bonds?"

The sallow face flushed a little, and a softer light came into the keen black eyes. Adam Fanshaw had not spoken without reason when he declared, a few hours earlier, that Ishmael Black was strongly "struck" with the woman whom he first met at the barricade. If not precisely love at first sight, it was a sentiment that might easily be fanned into a much hotter passion.

"That is what I meant by the partnership, so far as you are concerned. You would have your share, and through her, another, even if you failed to freeze out White. You two could run the machine pretty much as you liked, with a woman as determined as my client against him. She has money enough to buy over his men, and that would keep him from obstructing the works, as he does now."

"It might be done," muttered Black, more to himself than in reply to the glib-tongued lawyer.

"Our part will surely be done, and done thoroughly. What comes of your chance, depends altogether on yourself, and the manner in which you make your first advances."

"I was thinking of freezing White out," muttered the mine-owner, his sallow face flushing.

"There's no harm in taking a sly glance at the other possibility, is there?" laughed Fanshaw, very naturally for one who had, not so many hours before, himself attempted to play the lover to the very woman in question. "It may all be my imagination, of course. You might not take a fancy to the lady, on closer ac-

quaintance, and she might learn to hate you to the full as cordially as she did her husband. But as I said before, it's a chance well worth carefully weighing before flinging it over your shoulder."

"Drop it for the present, and tell me what the other proposition you spoke of amounts to," said Black, once more cold and hard.

"Just this: You are to banter White into setting a price on his interest in the 'Way-up Mine. He'll do this, if you manage him right, for he knows that you haven't the ready money to pay him down with. Get him to set the price before witnesses. You can do it by naming your own selling price, and if he don't try to shut you off by offering to accept the same amount, in hard cash, I miss my guess."

"Where's the cash to come from?"

"You have enough to put up to bind the bargain, and we'll supply the rest the moment it can be brought from Denver, if he declines to accept a certified check. You nail him fast, and we'll attend to the rest, the money passing through your hands, of course. For the present we will keep in the background."

"And for the future?" slowly asked the mine-owner.

"You can sell your interest at the same figures, or, if you prefer, can remain in as a partner with a third interest in the output."

"Who is it that supplies the money? Not you?"

"I only wish I was able," laughed Fanshaw, lightly. "The money comes from Mrs. Amory."

"Then, if she will permit it, I would rather see her in person before I fully decide which proposition to accept," slowly uttered Ishmael Black, keenly observing the face of the lawyer as he spoke.

Whatever his suspicions, he saw nothing in that round, sleek face to confirm them. Fanshaw seemed to take the matter as natural enough under the circumstances, and to really feel the pleasure he put into his voice as he responded:

"That can easily be arranged, and without awakening the suspicions of White, I fancy. I'm sure you won't regret it, my dear sir! I'm really delighted with my success, partial though it is as yet, for I hardly expected to find you willing to listen to reason. In fact, I admit that I mistook you for a sour, flinty old rascal to-day!"

"I can be both hard and tart enough to those who come at me the wrong way," grimly replied the mine-owner.

"But I know you better now," laughed Fanshaw, leaning over to grasp the sinewy hand in his own fat paw, shaking it cordially. "I'll arrange the interview you ask for, on one condition: that you never so much as breathe a hint as to my foolish match-making!"

He laughed, and Ishmael Black joined him freely, but their mirth was cut short by a sudden tumult coming from some little distance. The sound of firearms came to their ears, mingled with human yells and shouts, in a manner that could by no possibility be mistaken.

A savage oath broke from the grating teeth of the mine-owner as he sprung to his feet, leaping to the door and tearing it open, listening for a moment with inclined head, then grating:

"The infernal fools! The devil's to pay now! White's gang and mine have come together, and just as things were coming around—I'll kill the ones that set it going! Come, Fanshaw!"

"Thanks, but I'm not a fighting man!" replied the lawyer, with a wry grimace that turned to a look of relief as Ishmael Black dashed away without waiting for an answer. "Devil burn the hand that started that row! Could it have been that Prince Amory?"

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### "GREAT ROWS FROM LITTLE RACKETS GROW."

If Two-story Johnson and Mallet-foot Hennepin were but slightly versed in the "manly art of self-defense," they seemed determined to lose little time in showing each other all about the offensive portion of a pitched battle.

For months the two semi-chiefs had been growling and snarling at each other, ready at any moment to fly at each other's throat, had they not been held in check by their keener-sighted, more prudent superiors.

Human nature is the same all the world over, and though the Black and the White parties were at enmity, there were not lacking those who were ready and even willing to take and carry, possibly adding spice to what was already hot enough in its purity.

Two-story vowed that if somebody would put George Washington's favorite henchman to soak in clean water for a month or so, he would pin his ears back and swallow him without greasing.

Mallet-foot solemnly declared that just as soon as he could catch a cold in his head sufficient to close his nasal passages, he would put on gloves, tie the lengthy satellite in a double bow-knot about his neck, and parade the street of 'Way-up for one hour by the watch, unless the buzzards and crows bothered him too much.

In the nature of things, a collision had to

come off between them, sooner or later, and now that the permission was granted, the two rivals cut little time to waste in sparring for an opening, or in putting on the light and fancy touches.

A blind rush, a furious grapple, a savage writhing and twisting to and fro, ending in a "dog-fall," side by side upon the hard ground. A desperate kicking and scrambling, in which one man was on top for an instant, only to be turned and mounted in turn. Plenty of panting oaths and grating curses. Broken threats in almost any quantity. Vicious vows to do this and do that, but as yet no actual harm accomplished, thanks to that same close grapple. Neither could strike a blow, lest in freeing an arm with which to do so, his adversary gain an advantage which might not be so readily recovered or retrieved.

Almost as excited were the men clustering about the rivals, each one encouraging the representative of his party, cheerfully suggesting the speedy extermination of the other chief. And as the growing tumult brought fresh accessions to each party, the row grew louder, the crowding closer, the shouts and cries taking on a more sanguinary hue.

Then, as the broad shoulders and muscular arms of Mallet-foot, no longer handicapped by the physical peculiarity which gave rise to his nickname, began to prove too much for his more active but less muscular adversary, the rapture of the White party burst all bounds of decorum—and right there the music began!

One of the Blackites hurled a stone into the ring with an accuracy that rolled Mallet-foot off his half-smothered opponent, nearly cracking his skull and completely scattering his wits for the time being.

A White partisan saw the deed, and instantly "went for" the perpetrator, with a howl of indignation. And then—the fight of the Kilkenny cats was fairly inaugurated!

There were a number of shots fired during the first few seconds, but so hurriedly that comparatively little execution was done. The crowd was too densely packed for anything that savored of deliberate work, such as naturally belongs to the burning of powder. Fists and feet are so much more easy to handle, where one is jostled on every side, and there is no time to recognize an enemy from a friend, much less single out one fit for slaughter.

Fists and boots ruled for the first few minutes to be supplemented by stones or clubs, with a few knives flashing in the bright moonlight as the row grew older.

A sort of Donnybrook Fair affair.

But this comparatively harmless state of affairs could not last long. Men were beginning to smart with bruises, to pant from their furious aimless efforts. Already their aimless efforts were being turned more to account. Even this early their aimless cries were taking on a party aspect, the Blackites howling to down the White gang, and *vice versa*. And instinctively, as it seemed, the two parties were beginning to draw each to its own side, wasting less blows on friends than the better to supply their enemies.

Outnumbered from the first, and still further handicapped by being deprived of their leader through treachery, the White gang gradually lost heart, though fighting all the more desperately on that account.

Mallet-foot Hennepin lay where the cowardly blow had stretched him, out of the fight for the present, if not for all time. Two-story Johnson had managed to put in some pretty effectual work during the few seconds immediately following the overthrow of his rival, and before the surging crowd swept him away with it. Then, his voice rose among the loudest, urging the utter extermination of the enemy. And he proved that whatever else he might lack, physical courage was not among the list. He led his men into the thickest of the fray, plying his bony fists, using his huge feet as though he had taken a lesson in the art from the Nameless Sport himself.

Then there came a wild, terrible sound that rose above even the uproar of battle, and causing the Black gang to involuntarily pause.

Yet it was only the sound of a single voice. But the owner of that voice was Ishmael Black, and he was a host within himself.

"Hold, you snarling devils! I'll riddle the man under my employ who dares to fire a shot or strike a blow before I give him leave! To this side, all who are my friends!"

There came no answering cry from the lips of George Washington White, or even from Mallet-foot, and as the Blackites hastily crowded in the direction of that sharp, shrill, stern voice, it was natural enough that their enemies should be quite willing to let them go without much reluctance.

Just at the edge of the shadow stood Ishmael Black, his tall figure seeming even taller than ordinary, and his eyes actually shining from under his slouched hat with a cat-like glow!

In either hand he clasped a revolver, each muzzle raised and turned backward until the silver sights almost touched his shoulders. He seemed trying to single out the man in all that scramble on whose head he might place the responsibility for that luckless outbreak. Or—

was he looking for the face and figure of his partner, George Washington White?

If so, he was fated to be disappointed. The portly leader of the opposing faction was nowhere visible, nor could anything be seen of his recent acquisition, the Nameless Sport.

As his men separated from the enemy, the White partisans sullenly falling back, but not actually retreating, Ishmael Black singled out his henchman, Two-story Johnson, as the proper one from whom to glean information.

"What does all thi' mean, Johnson?" he demanded, his tones hard and menacing. "I don't want to think you in the wrong. I don't believe you are a man to willfully disobey my orders. I warned you to stand any insult, anything short of actual violence, before striking back. If you have remembered this, all well and good. If you have failed—if I find you have kicked up this row over your quarrel at the barricade this afternoon—the Lord have mercy on your soul!"

"Was I to stan' an' take everythin'?" sullenly muttered the giant. "Was I to stan' up an' be knocked down by that cussed Mallet-foot, jest to tickle his crowd? Ef I was, then I don't want to live no longer!"

"They picked on him, boss!" cried an eager voice.

"That's a lie, and you know it!" came an angry voice from the opposite party. "Two-story came boiling in Billy Bradley's after gore, and wouldn't be content until he got it!"

"Mallet-foot crowded him so hard—"

"And one of your gang knocked him stiff with a rock from behind, just as he was making Johnson chaw dirt!"

From speaker to speaker Ishmael Black turned his face in quick succession, his weapons ready to drop in position at a moment's warning, his black eyes glowing redly, his hard face harder than ever.

"I licked him once an' I kin lick him ag'in!"

Hoarse, hardly articulate, these words came from Mallet-foot Hennepin himself as he staggered to his feet, staring half-blindly about him, plucky and full of fight as ever.

"You couldn't lick one side—"

That was enough for the White lieutenant. He recognized the voice of his bitterly hated adversary, and with a howl of fury he shuffled forward in that direction—but not to reach Johnson.

To do him justice, that elongated worthy seemed more than willing to join issue with his rival again, on the same terms as before, but Ishmael Black decided otherwise. He sprung swiftly forward, reversing the revolver in his right hand as he did so, and felled Mallet-foot to the ground like a dead man, with a single stroke from the heavy butt.

There was a brief, almost painful silence following this brutal act; brutal, since Mallet-foot was little better just then than a blind man, his brain whirling dizzily, his powers weakened, his wits all abroad from the effects of that blow with a rock while fighting Johnson.

Then—a sharp, clear voice broke out from the White ranks:

"A cowardly blow, and here goes to wipe it out!"

A flash, an explosion, and Ishmael Black recoiled, for the moment apparently on the point of falling beside his victim.

"That for poor Mallet-foot!" cried the same clear voice, adding:

"Rally, Whites! It's do or die now! The blame rests with them, and we'll fight it out on this line if—"

The historic quotation was not completed, or if so, it was drowned by the howl of fury that came from the united lungs of the Black gang.

"Down 'em, lads!" screamed Two-story Johnson, in his intense excitement, striving to find a weapon in its accustomed place at his waist. "They've salivated the boss, but—"

"Steady, Whites! The worst one of the lot is gone, and—"

"Is coming, rather, you curs!" screamed Ishmael Black, steadying himself and leaping forward with rapidly-exploding revolvers, blood dripping from his bullet-torn cheek; but the injury seemed to serve as a spur on a fiery horse, after the first benumbing shock was overcome.

And then there was a miniature pandemonium in 'Way-up for a few seconds. The Black gang followed their chief with a hearty good will, while the White partisans met them desperately, though plainly feeling the want of an acknowledged leader.

The long-nursed enmity now found full vent; for months the fight had only been stayed off by the prudence on the part of the two rivals, each one impatiently awaiting for the other one to strike the first blow, and therefore put himself in a position to be blamed for all that might follow.

Now the explosion had come, and though Ishmael Black felt that it could hardly have fallen at a more inopportune moment, he knew that he could do nothing else but fight it out to victory or defeat.

Pistols spoke rapidly, doing most of the work, for the White party did not make a stand long enough to enable the Blackites to fairly close

with them. Either through a shot or some other cause, that clear voice no longer encouraged them.

Hot enough while it lasted, but quickly over.

The White men broke and scattered in every direction, each one apparently thinking solely of himself, and with redoubled fury the Black gang, also divided, in hot pursuit.

Ishmael Black shouted after them, but for once his voice was powerless. It may not have been heard, but if so, it was unheeded. The taste of blood had turned his men into demons for the time being, and all discipline was forgotten.

That was a wild, never to be forgotten night in the annals of 'Way-up, though, when the cost came to be counted up, there was not so much to grieve over after all. Not nearly so much as would have been the case had not Ishmael Black so early lost all control of his men.

Now that the long-looked-for rupture had taken place he wanted to make a clean sweep, and put the matter forever beyond a doubt. If he could have held his men in hand he would have systematically crushed the enemy, a dozen here, a score there, leaving none behind him.

As it was, he rushed from one place to another, trying to collect his men, but losing them almost as soon as a dozen were secured, in his efforts to bring more under control.

Raids were made on saloons, and liquor ran like water. Men forgot to fight in wrestling with this new foe, and every hour was lessening the danger of the White party, even as it increased that of the enemy.

Ishmael Black saw this, for even in his wild excitement his brain kept cool and clear enough to realize what might be the result unless this mad folly was checked in time.

True, the White party was scattered and for the most part run out of town, still further demoralized by the strange disappearance of their natural leader, George Washington White. But there were men of nerve in their ranks, and should they learn how miserably the enemy was acting—how thoroughly they were disarming themselves—a rally might be made, and the scale of victory turned once more.

Realizing that he would be fortunate if he could hold the vantage he had thus far gained, Ishmael Black caught a number of the most sober fellows who owned his authority, and partly by promises to reward them munificently, partly by swearing that if they failed him now, they should one and singly answer to him at the pistol's mouth, he set to work capturing his drunken men, singly and in couples, dragging them off and placing them under guard in Billy Bradley's saloon and gaming hall.

It was slow work, and not always without danger. Drunken men have little regard for their superiors in rank, as such, and more than one was clubbed, more than one was shot or cut in the struggles which ensued. Nor were the roisterers the only ones to suffer. Several of the fellows who tried to bring order out of the confusion were disabled, just when Ishmael Black could least spare them.

In person he performed much of the work, and he never went for a man but what he brought him out, more or less easily. Even a drunken man knows when he has met his master, physically and mentally.

Thus a large portion of the night was passed, and Ishmael Black had no time to spare for marveling at the absence of George White and the Nameless Sport. His only thought in their direction, after seeing how idiotically his men were bent on throwing away the victory they had almost insured, was a grim hope that neither of them would put in an appearance before he could at least partially sober up a few of his heelers!

But then, just as he was beginning to feel that his busy work was not wholly without reward, a couple of his men brought in another whom he recognized with a fierce oath.

"You here! What brought you? How long have you been away from the mine? Devil grill you alive! why don't you speak out?"

The fellow was drunk, hardly able to stand alone, but as those blazing eyes glared at him, as those bony fingers quivered as though about to fasten on his throat, he suddenly grew sober through fright.

"The row—we thought you needed us, boss!" he faltered, shrinking back, a pitiful burlesque on manhood.

"How many came with you?" demanded Ishmael Black, whipping his hands behind him as though to resist temptation, his voice growing cold, and even his face pale and hard-set.

"The hull gang, I reckon," muttered the wretch, shivering anew.

Ishmael Black turned abruptly away, his head bowed, his teeth grating savagely together. He believed the enigma was solved. He believed he could account for the strange disappearance of George White and his new acquisition, the Nameless Sport.

"Mebbe it ain't too late, boss," ventured one of his men who had been foremost in reclaiming the straying members of the gang.

But Ishmael Black waved him off impatiently. He knew it was too late, in the sense conveyed by that speech. He knew that the White gang

were in possession of the 'Way-up Mine, and that, if he had not actually known it before this, George Washington White would surely discover why he had been so eager to purchase the mine.

"After all, what matter?" he mentally uttered as he stood moodily gnawing his thumb. "The ice is broken, and we can swear the first blow on them. He may have the mine in his possession, but he can't rob it. He can't hold it a week unless we pass in provisions to keep him from starving. A week will do it—or an hour, as soon as those infernal idiots sober off."

He roused himself and looked more natural as he turned and took a look at his men. Many were too drunk to stand up, while others were but little better so far as actual service was concerned. In all, he could not count on more than a score of serviceable men, and some of them must be left behind to keep guard over the drunkards.

Still, he would not lose time in waiting for the drunk to get sober. It was barely possible that his fears were without foundation in fact, and a hasty move might even now be in time to checkmate his rival, should the same thought occur to him.

"Gibson, can you keep these drunken brutes in subjection with three picked men to aid you?" he asked, turning to the man who had spoken.

"Easy, boss," was the prompt response. "Give me leave to use my tools if they try to crowd me, and I'll agree to hold the lot myself."

"I believe you would, Gibson," grasping his hand and pressing it with a cordiality rare for him. "I'll not forget your work to-night when the time for settlement arrives, be sure of that. But I can leave you three men of your own choice. Pick them out at once."

Gibson obeyed, without a word of inquiry. And with such of the rest as he could trust for immediate work, Ishmael Black led the way out of 'Way-up, and direct to the mine of that name. To its immediate vicinity, rather, for before he came within pistol-shot, a sharp challenge rung out in tones that could not be mistaken:

"Halt right thar, you! Black or White, durn ye?"

It was the voice of Mallet-foot Hennepin, and Ishmael Black no longer doubted that George White had stolen a march on him. But before he could reply, Hennepin uttered a savage curse of hatred, crying:

"You, is it, Ish Black? Take that fer your dirty lick a bit ago!"

A rifle exploded, and the lead sped on its mission!

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### ANOTHER STUMBLING-BLOCK IN THE PATH.

At least one other person who claimed an important financial interest in the 'Way-up Mine, was startled and disconcerted by those sudden sounds of battle, instantly connecting the disturbance with the schemes which were even then being reviewed by her busy brain.

Madam Coraline was alone in her chamber when the row burst forth. Seated much as when we last parted with her, though she had regained more of her usual self-control, and the haunted, hunted look had been driven from her face.

Adam Fanshaw had lost no time in carrying out her orders, as far as possible under the peculiar circumstances. He had taken a look at the other partner, George Washington White, and did not hesitate to say that he believed the fat member of the firm would prove far easier to deal with than Ishmael Black.

He said that the Nameless Sport was then beneath the same roof that sheltered them, which was the sum total of his information on that point. He had caught a glimpse of the Unknown drinking in company with a dissipated looking fellow in a saloon, but that fact was hardly worth mentioning, and so he passed it over in silence.

Having received his report and his advice, Mrs. Prince Amory, like any true woman, acted on her own judgment, sending Adam Fanshaw off to argue or browbeat Ishmael Black into an alliance against George Washington White.

She was waiting the result of this mission, when the wild uproar broke the comparative silence of the night. Instinctively she guessed what that meant. She knew how the two partners were arrayed against each other, even before her arrival at 'Way-up. She had been given a little specimen of how far that antagonism had progressed, by the check at the barricade that afternoon. And Adam Fanshaw had warned her of the critical state of affairs when he came back to report.

Mrs. Amory hesitated only a moment, then caught up a light wrap which she flung mantilla fashion over her head, leaving the room and hastening down the narrow, steep flight of stairs.

She met no one on the way. The hotel seemed deserted by all save herself, until she fairly gained the narrow little porch or veranda that ran along the front of the building, elevated a

## The Nameless Sport.

foot or two above the level of the street. Then she heard rapid footsteps in the bar, and passing along to where she could look through the first window, she saw the burly landlord hurriedly stowing away his liquors and goods, like one who fully appreciates the nature of the outbreak.

He was alone in the bar, and eager to have her doubts settled, one way or the other, Mrs. Amory passed from window to door and entered, her quick footsteps causing the landlord to whirl about with face paling and hand dropping to a pistol-butt, more like a robber caught in the act, than an honest man on his own business intent.

"It's you, ma'am!" he ejaculated, his lower jaw dropping in surprise.

"What does all this disturbance mean? Has the town been attacked by—by Indians, or road-agents?"

Doc Keefer—the title was purely honorary—forgot his own anxiety in that exhibited by his beautiful guest, and hastened to re-assure her as far as lay in his power.

"It's jest the boys hevin' a little jamboree, ma'am, which it needn't trouble you a mite, as long as you keep well out o' the way. Not that the wu'st an' meanest critter in the hull gang would be so low-down as to lift the weight of thar teentiest finger ag'in' sech as you, ma'am, fer they wouldn't. But when a bit o' lead does git astray, they ain't no sayin' fer sure jest whar the cussed thing will fetch up!"

"You think it is a fight between the followers of Ishmael Black and George White?"

"Cain't be nothin' els', from the row, ma'am," reluctantly admitted the landlord.

"And you seem to expect the tide of battle will turn in this direction," half-laughed Mrs. Amory, with a glance behind the bar.

"Ef it don't, the sneak-thieves an' dry lips will," responded the worthy host, with more freedom in speech and expression, since this fair woman showed more signs of amusement than hysterics.

"And you are going to mount guard over the treasure?"

Doc Keefer hesitated for a brief space, then said:

"I was 'lowin' to take a run out to see jest what was the row, but ef you feel anyways skeery, ma'am, why, in course—I won't."

Mrs. Amory shrugged her shoulders and turned away, saying:

"Don't inconvenience yourself on my account, I beg of you! I'm not quite sure I'll not take a little stroll toward the scene of action myself, if the disturbance increases!"

"Promise ye won't, ma'am," cried Doc Keefer, springing to her side with his homely face lit up with real alarm. "You don't know what harm might come to ye, in the row! Ef it is a pitched fight between the two gangs, they'll be wuss then devils alive! They've bin held in check so long, that when they do bu'st free, they'll be clean crazy! They wouldn't go fer to harm a hair o' your head ef they knewed it, but right thar's the p'nt! Atween the taste o' blood an' the whisky, the heft on 'em wouldn't know you from thar bitterest enemy!"

Despite her natural boldness, Mrs. Amory was impressed by this earnest speech, and if she had actually thought of venturing down toward the scene of the riot, she abandoned it then and there.

"If you will bring back word of how the fight is going, I'll agree to stay here," she said, as Keefer paused to catch his breath.

"Not out here, but up in your own room. Lock the door, an' stay quiet. Never mind ef ye do hear the boys kickin' up a row down here. It won't mean no wuss then a little drinkin', fer they hain't neither side got anythin' ag'in' me. An' both White an' Black is my fri'nds."

"Very well," was the impatient reply. "You are losing time. If you happen to meet Mr. Fanshaw, the gentleman who came here with me, tell him to make haste back; that I wish to see him at once."

"An' you'll go to your room?" persisted Keefer, adding apologetically; "As a lady, an' stoppin' at my house, I cain't help bein' uneasy, ye see, ma'am."

"I'm going," half-laughed the woman, passing out of the bar to the veranda, and then into the dark passage leading to the second story.

But as soon as Keefer left the house, hurrying toward the scene of disturbance, Mrs. Amory once more stepped out upon the veranda, her burning curiosity in no wise lessened by the warning she had received.

Just then there was a slight lull in the row, followed by a few minutes of utter silence, caused, as we know, by the appearance on the scene of Ishmael Black.

This lasted long enough to partly reassure the listening woman.

"Bah!" with a long breath of relief. "Nothing more than a drunken row, and over with for good. Things have worked too smoothly thus far, for his Satanic Majesty to play us such a soury trick as that!"

Even as she muttered those words, the fair brow clouded. She knew that matters had

gone anything but smoothly since her arrival within sight of 'Way-up.

The handsome, mocking face of the Nameless Sport seemed to rise up before her, smiling, yet menacing.

And over its shoulder peered another face, handsome, too, after its peculiar fashion, despite the lines and scars of long dissipation. The face on which her eyes had rested that afternoon as she was assisted from the stage by the Nameless Sport. The face of one whom she had long since believed dead and rotted to dust. The face of one far less welcome to her just at that point of the bold game she was playing, than would have been that of Prince Amory himself.

"Well, old lady, how goes it?"

Mrs. Amory was gazing in the direction of the disturbance, one side of her fair face lighted up by the rays of the lamp in the bar, the other illumined by the bright moon. She was standing on the upper step of the low veranda, one arm holding fast to the slender pillar that aided in supporting the roof above, her left hand clasping the thin wrap at her throat.

Taken all in all, she presented a picture well worth gazing at, and the curiosity of at least one person was arrested by her graceful posture and queenly figure. And then, stepping lightly and without a warning sound to betray his approach, this person crept up to within a few yards of the woman, approaching from the rear, pausing to utter the words recorded.

With a start and a stifled cry, Mrs. Amory whirled about and confronted the speaker, her face ghastly pale, her beauty gone, just as it had vanished more than once since her arrival at 'Way-up. Though years had elapsed since she last heard it, and though much whisky had roughened the voice, she instantly recognized the handsome, haggard face that smiled mockingly up at her.

"You—alive!"

The words dropped from her lips before she could check them, so complete had been the surprise, so unprepared was she for a meeting with this man just then. Even as they passed her lips, she realized her error, but it was too late then.

"Is that any more surprising than that you should be here, Coraline?" sneered the man, one thin hand caressing his blonde beard, his blue eyes shining with a metallic glow in the gloom. "If I escaped the grave, you cheated the gallows, and of the two, I consider your survival the most to be wondered at. Of course I would not be so ungallant as to even hint that it is to be the more lamented."

Coarse and even brutal the speech, addressed to one of the fairer if not always softer sex, and sounding even more coarse coming as it did from Jim-jam Jones, whose gentle politeness was an example for all 'Way-up to admire, if not copy.

He had not willfully deceived the Nameless Sport. He had not noticed Mrs. Amory as she stared panic-struck at him that afternoon, and in his great thirst for the liquor that was slowly, surely killing him, he failed to catch the meaning of those cunning hints and innuendoes.

But as his nerves grew steadier under the stimulus of whisky, his wits came back to him, and he remembered much that the Nameless Sport had let drop. His curiosity was excited by what he picked up during the earlier part of the evening, concerning the little affair at the barricade where Two-story Johnson halted the in-coming stage.

Free mention was made of a beautiful lady passenger, who joined Boss Black in charging the Nameless Sport with being Prince Amory, only to be laughed out of the notion. And then—well, this was the result.

Mrs. Amory was striving her best to steady her shaken nerves, and cover the unfortunate slip she had made in her surprise. She drew her queenly figure rigidly erect, her face grew hard and cold, her voice taking on an entirely different cadence as she spoke haughtily:

"I do not understand your meaning, sir. My name is not Coraline. I never met you before, to my knowledge, and I—"

"Have not forgotten how to prevaricate—that sounds better than lie, doesn't it dear?—since those delicious days when you and I played spoons together!" mockingly laughed Jones, adding with sudden sharpness, not unmixed with contempt: "Bah! do you think you can fool me again, with your arts, Coraline? Do you think that I have forgotten this?" and he rapidly tapped himself on the sunken chest.

"Once more, I do not know you, sir!"

"But I know you, my lady, and I'll take precious good care that all 'Way-up is just as well-posted, before the sun is a foot high in the morning. You are Mrs. Prince Amory, I believe?"

The woman was turning to enter the house, when something in his tone arrested her. He saw this, and laughed low, but mockingly.

"You're a precious fool for thinking you can bluff me, an old partner who knows every trick and turn in your game, Coraline," he laughed. "It cost me plenty of good money to get my eyes open. It cost me more than money, for that matter. I paid precious dear for my initiation, but if costly, it was thorough, and at the end

I knew you as completely as ever you knew yourself. I can guess what business brings you here, and I can tell you to a penny what you will make, if you stick to the line you have picked up just now."

"What do you mean?" she slowly asked.

"That I've got you foul. That one word from me will upset all the plans you have formed. That it is the prospect of gaining big money which brings you here, and that unless you let me into the game on the ground floor, I'll call on Ishmael Black and whisper in his ear—"

"Stop!" gratingly uttered Mrs. Amory, turning a startled glance up the street. "Some one is coming this way! Before, and I'll see you when we can talk without fear of being interrupted or eavesdropped. Refuse me this, and I'll shoot you down like a dog—and swear that I did it because you shamefully insulted me!"

She whipped forth a derringer and covered him with it, her eyes ablaze, her face stern and desperate.

Jim-Jam Jones flinched visibly, but growled out:

"Swear that you will keep your word, or—Bah!" with a short, meaning laugh as he turned to depart. "You dare not break it! I'll see you again, my dear, when company is less numerous!"

He turned and strode rapidly away, a backward glance assuring him that Mrs. Amory was beating a no less rapid retreat into the hotel.

Adam Fanshaw glared after the vanishing shape, his face hard-set, an ugly frown upon his usually placid brow. He believed he recognized the figure as that of the Nameless Sport, and he knew that the other shape was that of Mrs. Prince Amory. He fully recognized her, at least!

"Curse a woman, anyhow!" he growled, pausing and glaring after the shadowy shape, then turning a look over his shoulder in the direction of the fight—for just now the disturbance broke out afresh, following the brutal action of Ishmael Black in felling Mallet-foot Hennepin with his revolver. "Isn't it bad enough without her tangling things up still more with that infernal— Eh?"

He cut his mutterings short with a start as he turned his face once more to see the figure of the man whom he had detected in conversation with Mrs. Prince Amory, now approaching him rapidly. Instinctively one hand sought a pistol-butt, though he did not actually draw the weapon from its place of concealment.

For as Jim-Jam Jones passed into the circle of light shed by the lamps in the bar, Adam Fanshaw recognized his error. Whoever this fellow might be, he certainly was not the Nameless Sport, as he had at first believed.

With a sort of swagger such as he rarely assumed, even in his most drunken moments, Jim-Jam Jones approached the lawyer, doffing his battered hat and bowing with mock respect, then suavely asking:

"I believe I have the pleasure of addressing Mr. Adam Fanshaw?"

"That is my name, sir," was the stiff response.

"You arrived on the evening stage, I understand?"

"And if I did?" a little irritably retorted Fanshaw.

"In company with Mrs. Prince Amory?" persisted Jones, with no loss of blandness in either tone or manner.

"What are you trying to get at? What do you want of me?"

"Simply to make sure that you are the person I am looking for," was the brisk response. "Not so much for myself, but if I should make a mistake, it might prove an awkward matter for the lady."

"I am Adam Fanshaw, and I came here as the escort and protector of the lady whose name you have mentioned," sharply uttered the lawyer. "And now, sir, you will please tell me what it is you want of me?"

"To bear a message from me to Mrs. Prince Amory," was the reply, sharp and clear, in striking contrast to the tones he had thus far used. "She ran away at your coming, without waiting for me to finish what I wished to say. It is this: Tell her to write out the hour, place and manner in which she prefers to grant me a business interview, and addressing it to Eric Jones, leave it at the hotel bar to be called for."

"You have the cheek of a Government mule!" ejaculated Fanshaw, his face flushing hotly, his eyes flashing with indignation.

"You may also remind her that this is pure business, my dear sir," coldly added Jim-jam Jones, passing over the interruption without notice. "You may say that if she neglects or refuses to make the appointment as I indicate, I shall do myself the honor of calling on her in her own room, precisely at eight o'clock in the morning. Good-evening, sir!" and off he marched, leaving Adam Fanshaw to grate fresh curses between his teeth.

In anything but a seraphic humor he mounted the stairs and flung open the door of his client's chamber.

Mrs. Amory was seated on the edge of her bed, just as when he had left her to seek an in-

terview with Ishmael Black. She was a little paler than usual, but that was all the signs she gave of the severe shock she had so recently received. Unless he had recognized her on the veranda, she was determined not to allude to this fresh complication in the bold game they were playing.

"What is it?" she asked, the instant he entered the room. "What means all that racket? Surely the two gangs have not come together in earnest? Say that it is only a drunken row!"

"What's the use of lying, when there's nothing to be gained by it?" he snapped, dropping into a chair and mopping his heated brow. "They have come together in a fight over the property, and our cake's all dough!"

Expressive, if not exactly elegant.

Mrs. Prince Amory let fall an ejaculation that would hardly look nice in print, jumping at this chance to wreak her ill humor on this man, since she could not on the one she most bitterly hated.

"And you—what were *you* doing? Where were your wits? Why didn't you stop it, as you might if you were half the man you ought to be?"

"And you—are acting perfectly, of course!" sneered Fanshaw, breaking into open rebellion. "Who is this Eric Jones?"

"What do you know?" faltered the woman, turning deathly pale. "He did not dare to—"

"Who is he, and what hold has he over you?" sternly demanded the lawyer. "What right has he to command you to make an appointment with him, under penalty of forcing himself upon you in your own room?"

"You have talked with him, then?" coldly asked Mrs. Amory, with a desperate effort of will regaining her self-control. "Tell me just what passed between you, and then I will be equally frank with you."

Adam Fanshaw was not so sure of this, but he hardly cared to give open vent to his doubts just then. He briefly but clearly detailed all that is recorded above, giving the concluding warning word for word.

Mrs. Prince Amory listened closely, her hard-set face giving no outward signs of emotion, either of anger or of fear.

"Has he any actual hold over you, Coraline?" asked Fanshaw.

"He thinks so," was the cold response.

An ugly oath broke from the lawyer's lips.

"Curse the infernal luck! Everything is being upset, just as the game was working smoothly—just as all was coming our way!"

"What has happened? You saw Ishmael Black, then?"

"Saw him, and almost entirely won him over to our views!" with another oath, that stung even sharper than the one before it. "All he hung out for was an interview with you, to see if you fully approved of the scheme as I outlined it. The whole thing could have been brought to a perfect understanding before this night was over, only for those infernal ruffians; only for that infernal fellow with the face of Prince Amory!"

"You think *he* is at the bottom of it? Or do you know?"

"Of course he's at the bottom of it! White wouldn't dare put himself so fully in the wrong by striking the first blow, and Ishmael Black is too hard a master for his men to fly in the face of his distinctly expressed will. All was going so smoothly, too! He's our man, if some of those devils don't send him to Tophet with bullet or steel in this infernal row!"

"Did you learn anything positive about—"

"Your husband?" asked Fanshaw, as the woman hesitated slightly.

"Yes. That is the main point, remember. Before I can be generally recognized as his widow, it must be proved that Prince Amory is dead."

"I'm not likely to forget," with a short laugh. "I am just as anxious to prove your right to don widow's weeds as you can be."

"And you learned something?"

"That Ishmael Black has clean hands, so far as that is concerned," was the positive reply. "He may have suspected it, but I doubt his complicity even so far. White is the guilty one, depend upon it."

"So much the better!" with a quick flashing of her eyes. "Ishmael Black is worth a score such as White, and if he comes out of this row in good shape, I'll engage to make him just as eager as you or I in the hunt after the murderer!"

"I hope this new friend of yours won't interfere?"

"If he does—well, he must step out of the way, either by his own will or in answer to the arguments which I'll not hesitate a moment in advancing," slowly uttered Mrs. Prince Amory, with a hard, peculiar smile moving her red lips.

"And those arguments?" ventured Fanshaw, a little nervously.

"Will take the shape of—see!"

She partially drew the keen dagger from its place of concealment, then pushed it back again, smiling still more coldly as she said:

"If he insists on too much, Mr. Jones will regret it to the very last moment of his miserable life, Adam!"

## CHAPTER XV.

### "CALL ME PRINCE AMORY!"

If George Washington White had been gifted with one-half the amount of "back-bone" which formed a prominent characteristic of his rival, Ishmael Black, he would never have permitted the dispute between Mallet-foot Hennepin and Two-story Johnson to come to an open rupture, even though a dozen men like the Nameless Sport were mischievously egging them on.

He knew well enough what the probable result would be, but he lacked the nerve and decision essential to end the matter without delay.

From a safe distance he could have commanded well enough, or he could have held his own against any well-defined danger, for he was not exactly a physical coward.

But he had been frequently warned, whether correctly or not need hardly be discussed in this connection, that secret instructions had been given the Black gang, individually, to make sure of the opposing chief in case a row should break out. Right or wrong, White believed in the truth of this report, and it robbed him of what little nerve he might otherwise have displayed.

Thus it came about that he entered no positive protest against the fight as arranged by the Nameless Sport, although he could not help feeling that the consequences must be serious, if not fatal, to one side or the other. And it was personal fear that led him into the surest course of bringing defeat upon his own interests by leaving his men without an acknowledged leader in that crisis, just when his presence and voice would be of the most service.

"Curse the howling curs!" he grated, as he cast a swift, apprehensive glance over his shoulder as the row broke forth in full vigor. "It'll end in a death-grapple, I suppose! If my men lose—"

It was not at all an agreeable thought, for like a revelation he saw what defeat would mean to him and to his cherished dreams. For an instant he turned as though to rush back and dare all at the head of his men; but only for an instant. Fancy showed him each one of the Black assassins taking a deliberate pot-shot at himself, and the impulse was numbered among the things of the past.

"Mallet-foot will handle 'em just as well, and won't be nearly so great a loss if he gets knocked on the head," he muttered, as he resumed his rather hasty flight through the night, keeping off the principal street, dodging from shadow to shadow, carefully avoiding the strips and spots of clear moonlight as much as possible. "Even if he fails here I'll more than make it up at the mine—unless that infernal Black has headed me off in that direction!"

It was anything but a comfortable thought, and White uttered an explosive curse as it flashed across his excited brain.

He hesitated for a moment, but no more. That was his last hope of turning the awkward outbreak to his own advantage. If he could keep his men placed to watch over the 'Way-up mine, from breaking away to join in the riot at the town; if at the same time the Black guards were to prove less faithful to their trust; or if they could be surprised and overpowered by a sudden attack; even a defeat in town might not prove fatal to his hopes. He would be in possession of the most important piece of property, and that would be no mean advantage.

But George Washington, like some others on that same eventful night, was destined to have his calculations most rudely upset, for he had little more than cleared the outer edge of 'Way-up, than he was assailed from behind and either side, by unseen foes.

They were felt, if not seen! A heavy blanket was flung over the head and shoulders of the mine-owner, stifling his angry yell in its birth, and twisted so adroitly as to completely prevent his drawing a weapon or striking a blow. His feet were kicked from under him, and he fell to the ground, much as he had fallen that past afternoon under the no less adroit manipulation of the Nameless Sport.

A dozen enemies seemed to drop upon him and add their weight to the shock. A hundred hands seemed to be picking and tearing at him, binding him hand and foot, thrusting an odious gag into his gasping lips; but in part this was pure imagination.

His arms were firmly pinioned behind his back, and a gag was secured in his mouth, a tobacco-scented handkerchief binding this in place, but his legs were left at liberty as the growling order proved:

"Git up, Fatty, an' play ye wasn't a hog, ef you do look an' grunt like one! Git up, ef ye don't want to feel the spur!"

There was a rude tug at his collar, and a significant gleam as a bared blade was flashed before his starting eyeballs.

He scrambled to his feet, staring wildly about him, but before he could recognize a face, before he could do more than see that several men surrounded him, a thin but sufficient covering was slipped over his head, falling to his shoulders and effectually blinding him.

"We'll be your eyes, boss," chuckled the same gruff voice that had addressed him before.

"You'll git over the ground jest as fast, an' keep to a heap straighter trail. You're the wu'st critter to go crooked I ever see!"

He felt a firm grip fix upon his other arm, and as an impulse was given him by these unknown guides, the grim voice added:

"Walk a chalk, and you'll come out right as a trivet, boss! You never met gentler lambs then we be in all your life, ef we git our own way without too much kickin'. But kickin' is what we despise! An' ef you kick—waal, you feel the p'int?"

George Washington White sprung convulsively forward, arching in his back after a marvelous fashion, for he most decidedly did feel the point—of a keen knife, applied just where it would do the most good.

"Stiddy by jerks, boss!" chuckled the grim jester, his grip tightening with that of his fellow. "Be durned ef you ain't livelier then a broncho fu'st ketched up in the spring!"

"Anyway," broke in a second voice, "we've got his gait marked down, an' ef he tries to play old soger on us, we'll know jest how much spurrin' to do. Hitch along, Fatty!"

That was a hideous nightmare march for George Washington White.

He had not the slightest idea whether he was being urged. He was utterly unable to guess how far he was forced to tramp, or how many minutes, or hours, had elapsed since his capture. He could only wonder and dread what the end was to be!

He had not recognized figure or face, his capture had been so suddenly accomplished. The muffler over his head not only rendered eyesight useless to him, but it seemed to act as a disguise to the voices that occasionally addressed him. Apparently they came from the two men who grasped his arms between shoulder and elbow, forcing him over the rough ground, but each time they seemed different to his overwrought imagination.

Of course they were enemies, and almost as equally of course they must be acting in the interests of Ishmael Black. They were leading him far away from 'Way-up, the better to conceal his body when their dastardly mission was executed!

It would have been an unpleasant experience for a far braver and much more honest man than George Washington White. To him, it was positive torture. And worse from his being unable to see whether he was being urged. At any moment he might be stepping from solid ground to vacancy—be stepping over into one of the deep pits or yawning canyons—and if one foot happened to descend even an inch below the level of his other one, the trembling wretch experienced all the horrors of death!

Next to the deprivation of sight, was his inability to speak, to ask questions, if not to implore mercy. As money was his god, so he felt that if he could only utter aloud the wild offers of ransom that rushed pell-mell through his whirling brain, his life might be saved!

"Whoa-ap!" uttered one of his guards, checking him abruptly. "When ye once git a-goin', ye don't know whar to stop, do ye?"

Tremblingly, White listened, trying to divine what fresh torture awaited him, and a groan of despair rose in his throat and almost suffocated him as he caught the words:

"Git the rope, pard. You know whar we left it?"

He heard and with a choking groan, his limbs gave way beneath his weight. A rope! To be hung! It was worse than horrible!

"Stan' up, cain't you?" growled the voice, but adding: "Lay down then, fer I will be minded! Hurry up with that rope, pard!"

"I've got it," grunted the other voice, apparently under some sort of cover, from the peculiar deadened echo of his tones. "Reckon it'll hold, pard? Pears to me the critter hes laid on a full ton o' fat sense I see him the last time!"

"Ef it don't hold, it'll break," was the philosophic response. "Ef it breaks, he'll git that jest as soon, an' mebbe a bit sooner!"

"Bu'st him wide open, fer sure!" grimly laughed the second guard. "Ef I was so pesky fat, I'd w'ar iron hoops under my dry goods, to make sure ag'in' sech accidents!"

Imagine the mental tortures of helpless, speechless George Washington White as he listened to these diabolical jests! Death alone was terrible enough, without being made the object of such brutal, heartless remarks.

He tried to cry out for mercy as their strong hands once more fastened upon him. He kicked and struggled as best he could in his bound state. It is a marvel that his overwrought brain did not entirely give way before this horrible ordeal!

"Durn sech a contrary critter!" snarled one of his guards, as a floundering kick knocked his legs from under him, bringing him flat across the prisoner's middle with a force that deprived them both of breath for a second. "The rest o' you pesky idjits len' a han', cain't ye? Grinnin' an' kickin' up yer heels like durned loonatics!"

"You wanted to run the circus, pard," laughed a third voice, "an' of course we wouldn't chip in without an invite. Ef it wasn't wu't the axin', it wasn't wu't offerin' help."

Strong hands closed upon and held White powerless even to kick. He felt the rope snugly noosed about—not his neck, but his body, just beneath his armpits! And then, before he could fairly realize this fact, he was swung clear of the ground and rapidly lowered into the bowels of the earth, as it seemed!

Trying as this undoubtedly would have been, it was bliss compared to what the miserable wretch had anticipated, and when his feet struck solid earth again, he felt like uttering a prayer of thanksgiving!

His legs refused to support his weight, and he dropped in a heap to the ground. He felt the suffocating strain relax, and then a peculiar shaking of the rope as though his captors were descending to rejoin him. And such was the case, for a few seconds later, a pair of heavy boots struck him on the head with more force than ceremony.

"Ef ye hain't got perliteness enough to git out o' the way when ye see a man comin' starn fo'most, Fatty, all right!" chuckled a voice, adding in louder strains: "Come down, pard, quick as ye like! The others know what to do, I reckon!"

As he uttered these words, the owner of that voice was removing the noose from about White's body, then catching him by the heels, he dragged him unceremoniously to one side to clear the way for the descent of his fellow.

"Strike a light, pard, as soon as ye feel like it," added the first speaker. "It cain't shine clean up the shaft, an' the boys kin clap a stopper on anybody that tried to foller it up, ef it did. Git up, Fatty! We've nigh about got home, we hev!"

Trembling with a fresh accession of fear, George Washington White obeyed as best he was able, and after a few moments he saw a dull light shine through the covering over his head. The guiding hands once more closed upon his arms, and they passed along for several rods, through what appeared to be a contracted passage, finally emerging into a more open space, something like a chamber or cavern.

The muffler was slipped off, and the mine-owner instinctively glanced around him by the light of the flaring candle which one of his captors held up. It needed only a glance to tell him the truth. They were in an abandoned mine; beyond doubt one of those in which he held a one-third interest, as a member of the firm of Black, White & Amory!

"Right ye be, Fatty!" chuckled one of his guards, as he noticed the start of surprise and recognition. "It's the Pure Quill Mine, an' no mistake. You didn't think ye was hirin' men with good money to dig out your grave, did ye? Waal, sech is life in the Far West!"

White was too thoroughly amazed and bewildered to fully realize the significance of this cheerful observation, at first. Only at the Pure Quill mine? He could have taken oath that they had traveled miles upon miles beyond that landmark!

"Looks kinder 'plexyfied, don't he, pard?" muttered the man with the light, passing it before the nearly purple face of their captive. "The boss would kick up the devil's delight if he found the critter hed croaked, when he comes to squeeze him!"

"I don't reckon it's any wuss then the wickedness tryin' to git out, pard," retorted the other but at the same time busying himself with untying the firmly knotted handkerchief that held the gag in place. "You wouldn't pick him out as a 'ligious sort o' cuss, in a crowd, but I'm bettin' he's been doin' a powerful lot o' prayin' inside ever sence we drapped onto him! It couldn't come out through his trap, an' that's why—How do you reckon you feel, Fatty?"

The mine-owner was gasping, filling his lungs with the cool, damp air, working his half-paralyzed jaws, moistening his dry lips. It was comparative bliss after what he had endured, but the sound of that voice—the question it formed—recalled him to the danger which he more than ever believed threatened him. Husky, uncertain, he broke into a prayer for mercy, so abject, so cowardly, that it can find no place in this record.

It even disgusted these two men, who seemed anything but saints.

"Set down an' hold your hush ontel you kin speak white, Fatty!" one of them growled, at length, pushing the mine-owner back into the position indicated. "It ain't us es hes the say-so fer yer. Wait ontel the boss comes, an' pour out your slush to him—ef you wants to git sent over the divide a-kitin'!"

After the outburst, came a quiet. White sat in silence, his wits slowly returning, his presence of mind gradually gathering, his furiously thumping heart growing more natural in its pulsations. He felt that he was inextricably in the snare. He felt that his fate was sealed almost beyond a doubt. And this very despair served to nerve him for the bitter ordeal which he felt assured could not be long delayed.

He covertly scanned the faces of his two guards as they sat cross-legged on the ground, playing cards by the dim light of the candle stuck by its own grease to a projecting timber over their heads.

His worst fears were confirmed. Both of the

men he recognized as among those hired by Ishmael Black in the war for the 'Way-up Mine.

He watched the men play for some little time, trying to devise a method by which he might possibly win them over to his side. It was highly improbable, all things considered, but life and liberty are very dear, and at the worst he could only meet with refusal.

"Ef I was a rich man, pard, I wouldn't do nothin' but finger the pasteboards from git-up to lay-down," uttered one of the guards as he deftly shuffled the cards.

"You can be a rich man if you choose," impulsively ejaculated the mine-owner, catching at what seemed a favorable opening. "Set me at liberty and name your own price for the favor."

"That's one way, sure enough," laughed the guard, with a quizzical glance toward the prisoner. "That's one way, sure enough! I reckon you wouldn't mind puttin' the figger 'way up now, would ye?"

"Your own price, man," hurriedly replied the captive. "I'll load ye down with gold! I'll make you rich enough to play cards all your life, even if you never won a stake!"

"Sounds heap nice, don't it, pard?"

"Too mighty nice fer to ever come true, mate," laughed the other.

"It will—it shall come true! Only set me free and—"

"What would the boss say, do ye reckon?" dryly interposed the chief of his guards. "It won't work, Fatty. You ain't rich enough to buy a dead man back his breath, an that's what wed want the wu'st ef we was to play double on the boss!"

"Mighty right, pard!"

Instinct rather than reason told White that all was in vain. He could not bribe these men to betray their chief either because they were too faithful or because they feared their employer too greatly.

"You mean Ishmael Black?" he muttered, after a pause.

"We mean a heap better man than Ishmael Black when we say boss, Fatty, was the cool response.

"Not Black!" echoed the prisoner in surprise. "But I've seen you acting as a portion of his gang! I've seen—"

"Some o' the boys as helped bring you this fur, servin' as part o' your gang, too, you might say," laughed the other man.

"I don't understand! I can't think—"

The two men started, bending their heads in listening. Faint and indistinct there came to their ears a whistle, repeated after a brief pause. One of them immediately dropped his cards and hastened out from the chamber, vanishing amid the gloom. His mate picked up the cards and stowed them away in his pocket as he said:

"You want to know who the boss is? Waal, I reckon he's comin' to make you a little call, right off pretty soon in a hurry, Fatty."

A brief period of suspense, then two figures returned where only one had gone away, and by the dim light of the candle White recognized in the new-comer no less a personage than the Nameless Sport!

As he stared agape at the handsome face, smiling with a certain icy composure, of the man who stood before him with folded arms, a mad whirl of doubts and fears and rage swept through the brain of the mine-owner. This was the man who had so skillfully taken him in his toils! This was the man who had set the two bands to fighting over the 'Way-up Mine, and brought ruin upon his head!

"You devil!" he grated, forgetting his own helpless condition for a moment in his mad fury at having been so shamefully deceived and outraged. "You treacherous cur!"

"My dear George," smoothly purred the Nameless Sport, an injured light filling his great blue eyes. "Why will you be so obstinate? Why will you persist in calling me out of my name? I beg of you, as a very dear friend, to call me—Prince Amory."

"You lie!" snarled the mine-owner, hoarsely. "He's dead and—"

The Nameless Sport laughed softly as White abruptly brought his jaws together with a sharp click, shivering a little as though just realizing his imprudence.

"Go on, dear George! Prince Amory is dead. Red Turner first shot and then stabbed him to the heart. When sure the work was thoroughly accomplished, he tossed the carcass into the water to serve as food for the fishes. And then—What was the amount you agreed to pay him for the job, George?"

"You lie! I never hired him! He never killed him! He is living, on the mcney he stole from us, his partners!" panted White, hoarsely.

"Clear and positive proof—that you are lying, my dear fellow," lightly retorted the Nameless Sport, coming a little nearer and squatting on his heels before his captive. "I've got it all at my fingers' ends, you see. And if I conclude to press it, that fat neck of yours will grow at least a foot longer, thanks to the marvelous store of fat you have managed to accumulate, George."

"If you don't pull hemp before me!" muttered White, desperately.

"The time for that has gone by, George. You were foolish enough to listen to the voice of the charmer, instead of rallying your heelers to run me up a tree, out of hand. Even if you were in doubt about my being the simon-pure Prince, my likeness to him—which you acknowledged in a very public manner, George!—should have warned you of possible danger after my morals should be sufficiently corrupted by associating with you for a few hours—long enough to turn a saint to a demon!"

"What do you mean? What are you going to do with me?"

"First, argue you into a better state of mind. Just now you are too badly frightened, and too deeply angered, to be worth much as an ally. You are going to calm down; you are going to look at things just as I bid you—through my eyes, to put it briefly. And when you are fit for sober business, listen:

"You will admit that you stole the money from the firm of which you are a member. You will confess that you plotted to throw the odium of this theft, together with the blame of the forgeries, all upon the shoulders of Prince Amory. You will detail how you went to work to cover your tracks, by poisoning the mind of Red Turner against Prince Amory, hiring him to murder him and effectually dispose of his body."

"It is a lie!" hoarsely gasped White, shrinking away shivering.

"But I'll dress it all up until it will more closely resemble truth than truth itself," lightly laughed the Nameless Sport. "I'll arm myself against every peril, thanks to you, and then I'll blossom out as the Prince I've been charged with being so many times since I first struck 'Way-up. And one of my first bits of sport, after convincing the citizens, will be fitting a noose about that fat neck of yours, George!"

## CHAPTER XVI.

### CLEARING THE DECKS FOR ACTION.

MALLET-FOOT HENNEPIN was playing to get even, and if his aim had been as certain as was his intention, Ishmael Black would have taken no further interest in the struggle for the 'Way-up Mine.

But moonlight shooting is proverbially uncertain, and thanks to what he had gone through with that night in the shape of bony fists, flinty stone and metal-bound butt of revolver, the eyesight of the White lieutenant was hardly in condition to do him proud as a sharp-shooter.

Ishmael Black heard the vicious whirring of the lead in close enough proximity to his ears to lead him to seek cover without standing on ceremony, and his men were even more prompt than he.

"That pays you off, durn ye!" cried Mallet-foot, his voice full of savage triumph. "Chip in on a crooked hand ag'in, will ye? Jumpa—"

"See how short you can bite it off, you fool!" came sharply through the night, in tones only too readily recognized.

"Cuss the luck! An' double cuss you, Ish Black!" savagely cried Hennepin, in his disappointment and fierce hatred exposing himself to view as he strove to catch sight of his hated foeman. "Stan' out an' hold still while I try another shot at ye, ef ye ain't a coward!"

"We kin drop him too cold, boss!" muttered one of the Blackites.

"Hold your fire," was the stern response to this hint. "And you, Hennepin, can thank me for giving you your life. Get back under cover before you tempt my lads too severely."

"Durn your lads! It's you I want!"

"And all I want of you is a flat answer to one question: Is George White with you there?"

"He says he kin tell you better ef you come and take a look fer your own self, Ish Black," was the response, after a brief silence.

There was a brief silence. Ishmael Black did not for an instant doubt the presence of his rival in the mine, or in the rude buildings which protected the entrance proper, rather. If anything, this hesitating answer rather confirmed his belief.

"Is he too badly scared to talk for himself, Hennepin? If not, let him step forward and we'll discuss this little affair."

"Fer you to take a pot-shot at the boss, hey?" laughed Mallet-foot, mockingly. "Light up a big fire whar you're hidin', stan' up in open view, givin' us as squar' a sight at you as you'd hev o' the boss ef he was to do as you ax, an' then he'll talk to you blind. That's all he will do, critter, an' ef it don't suit your idees, jest try to git along with a man o' my size an' caliber."

"Just as you say, Mallet-foot," easily replied Black, his tongue running glibly enough, though his brain was busy with much more important matter. "For pure pleasure, I'd rather talk to you five minutes than with George for an hour. But he's such a cowardly cur that just now he's my preference. I could scare much better terms out of him than I can hope to get out of you!"

"Mebbe we won't come down so mighty hard onto ye, Black, ef you eat your humble-pie without makin' up too nasty faces!" laughed Mallet-foot, with grim humor. "We'll jest

shoot off your fool men, an' string you up as a sign to the crows!"

"You're too monstrous kind, Mallet-foot!" laughed Ishmael Black, mockingly. "You'll give us until daylight to shape our thanks, won't you, my dear fellow?"

"Long as ye keeps to the loo'ard, honey," was the prompt retort. "We're too crowded in here fer to hev the air too strong scented!"

"Kick White out of your company and I don't reckon you'll have any serious trouble! We'll keep our eyes open for him, Hennepin."

"Bet ye will! But the fu'st glimp 'll be all you'll wait to take, now I tell ye!"

Ishmael Black deigned no retort to this scandalous hint, his voice hard and business-like as he spoke to his few followers:

"You can see just what is before us, men. White has got possession of the mine, but he'll wish he hadn't tried the trick on before the end comes. Of course I know I can count on you, one and all?"

The response was prompt and unanimous in the affirmative.

"I knew what the answer would be, but it's just as well to take nothing for granted, when so much is at stake," was the earnest response. "I don't think you will ever regret your choice, lads. When the victory is won—and now that the White gang have given us a chance to freeze them out without running any risk of being considered in the wrong, we'll make a sure job of it!"

"Which they'd do mighty quick, ef it lay in tha'r boots!"

"They've got the mine, and we've got them, unless they get scared and try to walk out before I can sober up the rest of our men."

"They'll find it a mighty rough road to travel, boss!"

"Ef we kin use our guns, anyway!"

Ishmael Black hesitated for a few moments, then added:

"Check them all you can, if they try to get out of the trap before I return, but don't banter them into trying a rush. Lay low as you are, ready to give them pepper if you have to, or to dodge them if they come too heavy. Watch all the approaches to the mine. Let any man enter that chooses, unless White himself should happen to be outside. I don't think he is. I reckon he was among the first to hunt the hole. But it may be that he is outside."

"Shell he stay outside, boss?" asked one of the men.

"Take him prisoner if you can without running too great a risk," was the slow response. "If you can capture him without letting those at the mine see your object too plainly—for that would insure a rush from them—take him prisoner and hurry him off to a safe spot until you can bring me word. If you can't take him—well, that is his lookout!"

"He ain't to git in the mine, anyway?"

"Not alive!"

"Shell we pepper him?"

"Drop him, only when you see that it is impossible to capture him with safety to yourselves," repeated Black, then dropping the subject. "I am going back to town, to look after the rest of the boys. As fast as I can sober them up, I'll send them to join you. And when all are fit for service, I'll come to take another look at the prospect."

Some few more words were spoken before Ishmael Black took his departure, but they need not find place here. Enough has been given to shadow forth his policy under the present situation, and therefore the space may be spared.

Ishmael Black hastened back to 'Way-up, to find the town gradually quieting down. Apparently the White gang, deprived of their chief, had no intention of renewing the fight, within the town, at least. All save the dead, or those too sorely wounded to travel, had vanished from sight, either fleeing to the hills or else taking to hiding-places as yet undiscovered by the victorious party.

That might well be, for little or no search was being made for them. The few sober men belonging to the Black contingent had their hands full in collecting their stray sheep and bringing them back to the fold, for the nonce represented by Billy Bradley's establishment.

The roisterers not yet gathered in were, for the most part, too drunk, or too nearly drunk, to make much disturbance.

Ishmael Black found the good work going on, conducted by the ever-faithful Gibson, who had by the free use of cold water and blunt arguments, sobered off a sufficient number of the men to replace the guard, which he could better employ in collecting the stragglers.

Gibson flushed with pure delight when his chief publicly praised him for his loyalty and discipline, and immediately set to work with redoubled activity, calling cold water to his aid in greater quantity.

Ishmael Black sent a squad of the soberest men to join their fellows in keeping guard over the enemy at the 'Way-up Mine, then passed on to the hotel, where he was met by Adam Fanshaw with eager queries as to the exact situation of affairs.

These might have been in a worse state, ac-

cording to the reasoning of the mine-owner. White had given them a fair chance to gain their ends by force, without actually putting themselves in the wrong. The victory might be made complete by a single stout rush, or it could be gained just as certainly and with lessened risk by settling down before the 'Way-up Mine and waiting until starvation should bring the enemy to terms.

"I trust Mrs. Amory has not been seriously alarmed?" ventured Black, with a curious hesitation in his tones.

"Not so much as the majority of ladies would have been in her situation," responded Fanshaw. "Naturally she is troubled lest that little arrangement, which I had the honor to propose, if you remember, should be upset by this unfortunate outbreak."

"Of course she has long since retired?"

"Not she!" with a short laugh. "I actually had to lock the door on her, to keep her from sallying forth to learn just how matters were progressing. A wonderful woman, sir! A most remarkable woman!"

Ishmael Black found his throat difficult to clear, somehow. And he found his seat very hard and uncomfortable, to judge from the manner in which he shifted about. But all this vanished like magic when Fanshaw observed:

"Mrs. Amory listened to my report with intense interest, and only regretted the outbreak coming so soon, lest it fill your hands too full for granting her a personal interview, when—"

"Beg her to name an hour when she will receive me, sir, and I'll wait upon her. Even now, if it wouldn't look too much like crowding matters, I'd be delighted to see her!" eagerly uttered the mine-owner.

As this was precisely what Fanshaw most desired, he lost little time in improving the opportunity.

"I know she will be delighted to meet you, but to make all sure, if you will wait until I can inform her—"

"I have an hour or two to spare, and could not employ it to better advantage, my dear fellow!" was the quick interposition. "If you will be so kind as to gain her permission, I'll wait, gladly!"

Adam Fanshaw hastened away on his mission, returning after an absence brief enough to satisfy even the curiously eager wishes of the mine-owner.

"I found Mrs. Amory quite willing to meet you, Mr. Black," was his cordial report. "I begged her to go to my room, where we can talk without danger of being overheard or interrupted. You do not object?"

Of course Ishmael Black did not object. Busy as he had been ever since his interview with the lawyer was cut short, the hints dropped by Adam Fanshaw had taken root deeply. The grim mine-owner had been most favorably impressed by the charms of Mrs. Amory, although he might not have given her more than a passing thought only for the curious manner in which their mutual interests seemed intertwined. He felt that he was in a position to "freeze" George Washington White out of the game, but by an open alliance with the claimant of the other third interest in the 'Way-up, his hand would be double in strength.

And then—there was something fluttering curiously in that organ which may—for lack of a better term—be called his heart! Not that he was in love. Ishmael Black could never rise so high as that! But it would be the easiest, pleasantest manner of getting the great bonanza fully into his own hands. And, after all, he was growing old. It would be rather nice for him to have a lady as charming as this to pet and care for him!

Mrs. Prince Amory was awaiting them when the little chamber under the roof was reached. Charming, looking her very best, sweetly gracious, yet just a little in awe of the mine-owner. Not too much—just sufficient to tickle the vanity of the man, without arousing the suspicions of the speculator.

Adam Fanshaw also played his part to perfection, permitting his companions to do most of the talking, slipping in a word here and a suggestion there, making his points without seeming to guide their thoughts or influence their judgments.

To go over in detail all that was said, would be to repeat in a great measure, what has already been recorded in the interview which took place before the outbreak came to break off negotiations between the lawyer and the mine-owner.

Enough that, though each passing minute made him more nearly in love with this woman, so charmingly trustful, so impulsive without being at all unlady-like, so frank and natural, yet so business-like. Ishmael Black did not entirely lose his head as a man of business. He declined to enter positively into a treaty at that moment. He wished for time and leisure to weigh the matter, to examine their papers and proofs.

Mrs. Prince Amory was just a little inclined to press the matter to some definite conclusion, then and there, but Adam Fanshaw managed to convey a hint which she was wise enough to accept. And so, agreeing to meet again on the morrow—or later in the day, since already there

were signs of approaching dawn to be seen in the East—Ishmael Black left the hotel to look after his men.

Adam Fanshaw escorted the mine-owner down stairs to the veranda, where he parted from him in apparently the best of humors.

A disagreeable surprise awaited him on his return, and a sharp oath was ground between his teeth as he heard voices above, and in one of them recognized that of the fellow who had so insolently made him the bearer of a message to Mrs. Prince Amory.

Fortunately for him, he had advanced with his usual soft steps, and his coming had not been observed by Jim-Jam Jones or Mrs. Amory. And crouching down in the dark on the top stairs, he listened eagerly.

"If I prefer to talk, instead of risking paper and ink, you hadn't ought to growl, Coraline!" were the first words he caught with sufficient distinctness to fully understand.

"I deny your right to crowd me this way!" was the low, angry reply. "There is danger of our being overheard. At any moment we may be interrupted. Mr. Fanshaw may return and—"

"And so snap would go another of your strings, eh?"

"You are drunk as usual! I will not talk with you now!"

"Yes you will, my lady!" and from his hiding place Adam Fanshaw could see the bummer shake one thin forefinger menacingly before the pale, angry face of the woman whom he clearly held in his power. "I know you of old. I know that you are slippery and most confounded hard to hold, when you take a notion to play shy. I know that you will try to gain time to win your ends without regard to my share in the pie. But it won't do, Coraline! I've got you just where I want you, and you've got to come to my terms!"

"So I will, if I must," sullenly retorted the woman, her long lashes only imperfectly hiding her blazing orbs. "I will give you a meeting as you demand. But not now—the risk is too great. I will drop you a line, according to your own suggestion."

"Which was made when I saw no good chance to get into your delightful presence again, Coraline," with a sneering laugh. "Now that I am with you, we'll talk it all over and come to a final agreement."

"I say I will not consent to any such thing!" with almost vicious emphasis. "If a hint gets out—well, then you will be the worst sufferer! I am a woman, and therefore sacred in a town like this. You—will have nothing but empty revenge. And that will not buy whisky!"

A sound just outside the hotel caused them both to glance apprehensively toward the staircase, and in a hurried voice Jim-Jam Jones muttered:

"Step into this room—it is empty, for I've been waiting there for a good hour, watching to catch you when that Black rascal should leave. Come inside and settle on some plan for a meeting where you and I can thoroughly discuss the situation, or I'll have it out with you right now and here!"

Mrs. Amory yielded, as the safest course which presented, and they entered the room, closing the door behind them.

Adam Fanshaw hardly waited for the catch to click in the lock before stealing forward on his tiptoes. Not to the chamber which they occupied, but to the one adjoining it.

The room was deserted, though evidently habitually occupied. Few citizens were under their own roofs that night.

Crouching down with his ear pressed against the thin partition, Adam Fanshaw could hear every word that was spoken in the next room.

"I will meet you when and where you say, Coraline," Jim-jam Jones was saying. "But if you try to fool me again—if you make an appointment and then fail to keep it to the very letter—I'll sing a song in 'Way-up that will knock your schemes higher than a kite."

Hardly as elegant as Jones was wont to be, but very expressive.

"I will meet you any place outside of town to-day," was the reply.

"That will be rather risky, won't it, my dear?"

"If you are afraid, so much the worse for you," was the cold retort. "You insist on little loss of time, and when I agree, you kick."

"Only on your account, Coraline," with a mocking laugh. "The men of 'Way-up are rather excited just at present, and there may be some among them who, ignorant of what I know, might be tempted to pluck the charming flower if—"

"I am not fool enough to go out without a guardian," was the cold interposition. "Adam Fanshaw will accompany me."

"Then, knowing what you are capable of, and judging him by the company he keeps, I will bring a friend with me, also."

"Whom do you mean?"

"Well, with such a wide circle to choose from, it is not so easy to settle on any particular one. By the way, what do you say to our mutual friend, the Nameless Sport?"

"You dare not!" was the passionate response.

"Try me, my dear," with a mocking laugh, then adding soberly: "You will leave Fanshaw behind, or I'll bring that man."

"So be it then," uttered the woman, yielding. "To-morrow I will walk out of town, toward the north, say. Watch and follow me. When there is no danger of our being observed, I will give you the signal. Then—say what you have to say, and I'll answer you."

"Not as you did the last time we had a friendly talk, Coraline," with deep meaning in his tones. "Try a trap of that sort, and you'll be the one to feel the pinch of the jaws. I'll wait, and watch. If you act straight, so much the better for you. If crooked—well, you have the rest of the night in which to imagine just what will happen!"

Adam Fanshaw heard the door open, and the bummer descend the steps. Then Mrs. Amory emerged and hastened to her own chamber.

#### CHAPTER XVII.

##### A DELECTABLE COUPLE.

ADAM FANSHAW watched through the chink of his partially opened door, the retreat of Mrs. Prince Amory to her own room. When fully assured that it was genuine, he emerged from his hiding-place, and stood for a few minutes in deep, earnest thought.

"What the Old Boy can there be between those two?" he mused, with the wrinkle deepening between his eyes, pinching his pendulous under lip with thumb and forefinger. "He's got her where the hair's short, and she knows it! Confound a woman anyway—as a partner in a ticklish game! If she don't jump the traces just when the crisis comes, it's because she's jumped them ahead of the game!"

It was a difficult position in which he found himself. They were playing a bold game in 'Way-up, but that was only one part of their scheme. Success in the first, meant success in the other, but the scales were so delicately balanced that the weight of a feather might turn all to defeat and ruin! More than once that afternoon and night Adam Fanshaw had caught himself wishing he had never listened to the voice of the tempter.

But gold was his god, and success meant much of the precious metal for his own pockets. And then, the greater the hold he obtained over this woman—wicked as he knew, bewitching as he found her—the more surely he could bend her to his will. And a portion of that will was that she become his wife!

He strode forward and rapped sharply at her door, trying the knob at the same time. It was locked.

"Open for a few minutes, my dear," he said, with just a trace of authority in his tones.

"I am tired. I must try and catch a little nap, Adam. Go away and wait until later, can't you?"

"You could spare half an hour for that rascally bummer, and—"

The door was flung open and Mrs. Amory confronted the lawyer, her blue eyes blazing, her face white and hard.

"What do you mean, Adam Fanshaw?"

"Business, my dear," was his cool retort, as he gently pushed her aside sufficiently to gain admittance, then closing the door and turning the key in its wards. "I heard all you and that fellow said, across the way."

"You spied upon me!" grated the woman, one hand moving up to her bosom, where Fanshaw knew nestled a dangerous toy.

"For your own good, quite as much as for mine," was his hasty reply, watching that plump white hand. "Don't kick up a row, Coraline. You can't afford to lose the only friend on whom you can place full dependence just now. Living, maybe I can untangle all this, but dead I'll only be an uncomfortable incumbrance."

He could not have chosen a better than this half-mocking, half-earnest tone, and Mrs. Amory dropped her hand, moving unsteadily back until she sunk down on the foot of the bed, covering her haggard face with her trembling hands.

"It was purely accident that led to my discovering you two in conversation without your first noticing my return," he said in a more soothing tone, as he took a seat beside her, one cool hand gently patting her bowed head. "You should be glad, not sorry, since you must feel that I can deal with this insolent rascal better than a woman, even one with your courage and cool wits. And you know that my duty, as well as my inclination, is to serve you and you alone."

"You heard all that passed between us, you say, Adam?" asked Mrs. Amory after a pause, but without lifting her face.

"Or nearly so. I heard him force you to consent to an open-air interview, when you were to come to some sort of terms with him."

"Anything was better than to have it out with him inside this shell of a building! If any other ears had caught our words!"

"Of course you'll not run the risk of leaving town without an escort, especially to-day, Coraline! There'll be hot work going on, and the risk be far too great. If you go, I'll go with you."

"You heard me propose that, Adam, and how

quickly he checkmated me? He's just devil enough to be as good as his word, too! And since he spoke of that reckless fellow with the face of—you know!—all my doubts and fears and suspicions have come back again! Suppose he should prove to be Prince, after all!"

"I'd like to take out a life insurance policy for a nice sum!"

"We haven't fairly hooked Black, if that is what you mean, Adam. He fights shy, and if he should discover anything really suspicious about us, he'd throw us over too quick!"

"Me, perhaps, but not you, Coraline," with a touch of jealousy that could not be entirely hidden. "Not unless he first put on green goggles with a flaw in each glass!"

"If one, both, Adam," was the quick, soft reply.

And then, for the first time in his life, Adam Fanshaw touched the red lips with his own. Only a touch, however. Mrs. Amory drew away with a flush, and the white-haired lawyer was too agitated to check her or to follow up his advantage.

"Business first, Adam," with a faint sigh; then shaking off her sentimental feelings, Mrs. Amory became her natural self. "You shall know everything, but you must not attempt to interfere with my actions just now. I must meet that wretch! He would ruin everything if I played him false now!"

"What is he to you, or you to him, Coraline? What hold is it he has over you?" almost sharply demanded Fanshaw.

Had she followed her first impulse, Mrs. Amory would then and there have made full confession; but she took time to reflect, and she dared not run the risk. This man's services were indispensable to her just then, and their loss would be fatal to her hopes. If he knew the whole truth, he might be frightened and abandon both her cause and herself. So she put him off yet a little longer.

There was enough of truth in the account she gave to make it appear quite natural, and keen man of the law though he was, Adam Fanshaw gave her story implicit credence. Never mind just what she told him, since it was not true, and since the correct history is soon to be placed before the reader.

Enough that Adam Fanshaw was quieted, if not entirely satisfied, and went away with the understanding that he was not to attempt to bear her company on that little stroll which she had pledged herself to take that morning.

If any sleeping was done in 'Way-up that night, it was by those with quieter consciences and more composed minds than Mrs. Amory. She lay on her bed until some time after the sun rose, but it was only to think and plan and study how she could the most surely shake off that ugly ghost of the past.

Adam Fanshaw brought her coffee and something to eat, and with a composure that surprised herself, Mrs. Amory partook of the refreshments. Then she announced her intention of keeping her pledge.

"It is early yet, Coraline," expostulated Fanshaw. "That rascal may not be expecting you so soon."

A short, hard laugh broke from her lips as she replied:

"I doubt if he has taken his eyes off this building since he left me last night! He will be on the watch, never fear. And the sooner it is over with, the sooner I'll be able to draw a free breath!"

"If I thought that danger would come to you, Coraline!"

"From him?" with a little laugh of contempt. "You don't know the rascal, Adam! He may snap and snarl, but let me show him a toy like this," tapping her corsage where the dagger lay hidden, "and he would crouch and whine like a cur!"

"If he don't anger you too much! If you don't give way to passion, and try to use it, Coraline!"

"If the sun don't lose its hold and drop on our poor heads, Adam! Come, go you and find out what our worthy Ishmael is doing, and I'll be back here to listen to your report."

Adam hesitated, looking very much as though he wished another kiss might come in his way, but Mrs. Amory smilingly pushed him out of the room, and he finally took his departure to carry out her instructions.

As though she was only waiting until he was fairly out of the way, Mrs. Amory soon after left the hotel, turning her face toward the hills that rose in the north.

There was little life or bustle in the town, that morning. The White gang had sought safer quarters, and the Blackites were for the most part collecting around the 'Way-up Mine.

So confident was she that Jim-jam Jones would be waiting and watching for her, that Mrs. Amory did not cast a single glance around her in search of him, but pressed on with a rapid step, as though anxious to get fairly clear of the town before he could intercept her.

Jim-jam Jones was watching for her appearance, and he at once moved off after her, though at a leisurely gait. Though not drunk, he was just sufficiently under the influence of liquor to be suspicious without being reckless. He had

seen Adam Fanshaw leave the hotel and move away in the direction of the mine where the trouble bade fair to come to a bloody end. This was natural enough, seeing that he was interested in the settlement, but Jim-jam Jones fancied he scented a trap, and he resolved to make sure that nothing of the sort awaited him before he called the woman to a parley.

Mrs. Amory turned away from the course which, if persisted in, would carry her near the 'Way-up Mine, veering to the left, where the country grew rougher and wilder. Jim-jam Jones frowned a little, and soon quickened his steps. His game was heading straight for the little valley in which lived Red Turner and his daughter Kate, and Jones had no wish to intrude on those quarters again.

So far as he could see—and he made the best possible use of his eyes—they were alone in the hills. There were no signs of a trap, though his suspicions immediately returned in full force as he saw Mrs. Amory seat herself upon a mossy rock, seemingly awaiting his pleasure.

The instant she did so, he dropped behind cover, and then slowly crawled around the position she had chosen, one hand ever ready to grasp and use a weapon should he discover an ambush. If there was one, he felt sure it would contain nothing more formidable than Adam Fanshaw, and he felt himself more than a match for that gentleman, unless taken by surprise and from the rear.

"When you are satisfied, Eric, I'm ready to listen to you," broke out a cold, sarcastic voice, although he could have taken oath that the speaker was wholly unsuspicious of his immediate presence.

He was startled into breaking cover, but he gave no outward signs of annoyance or discomfiture.

"A burnt child dreads the fire, I've heard said, Coraline, and you scorched my fingers most mercilessly, once upon a time," he retorted, advancing toward her chosen position.

She made no effort to arise, but gazed at him with a cold composure which he felt meant mischief. Nor was this impression lessened by the next words which dropped from her red lips:

"Speaking of scorching, reminds me that you haven't yet accounted for your presence in the upper regions, Eric. For years—whenever I have wasted a thought on you at all—I have always associated your memory with intense heat, and wondered mildly how you were standing it. You are positive you are alive? Not simply a spirit damned, permitted by your master to walk the footstool for a brief space?"

"Entirely alive, and thoroughly up to snuff, as you shall admit before this little interview ends, Coraline!" with a mocking bow, but followed with sudden bitterness: "Not that you are to blame! You did your level best to make me a spirit, curse you!"

"And I never regretted a failure one thousandth part as much as I regret this one," was the cold, yet bitter retort.

"And you'd ask nothing better than to remedy it, no doubt?"

"There's many a truth spoken in jest, Eric, I've heard. If wishes could kill, you'd hardly be where you are now. But a truce to left-handed compliments. You wanted to see me. You insisted on a private interview, and I have granted it. What do you want? Not to make love to me as in the days of old, I'm afraid!"

Hardened though he was, Jim-jam Jones flushed hotly at her mocking tones and contemptuous look. He had never been an equal match for this woman, even in her younger and less reckless days. He was less a match for her now, thanks to the liquid poison he had so assiduously courted. He knew this, but the reflection only made him more impatient, instead of increasing his guard over his hot passions.

"I'd sooner make love to a festering corpse!" he grated, viciously.

"Then of course you want money to buy whisky or gin," with an affected matter-of-fact air. "You robbed me pretty thoroughly in the old days, Eric, but I've gathered a little moss since, and don't mind parting with a few dollars—to hurry you into the grave!"

The last words were earnest enough, and Jim-jam Jones laughed a little as he saw that she was not nearly as cool and unconcerned as she would fain have him believe.

"Money first, and if money fails, Coraline, then revenge! And I've grown so hungry for the last, since seeing your sweet face again, that it will take a considerable pile of money to stall me off, too!"

"And if I refuse to be robbed, Eric? If I tell you that I'll only give you enough to pay for a rope long and strong enough to hang yourself with?"

"I'd swear you were lying, just as you have lied ever since you learned to talk," was the brutal retort. "Coraline, best guard that unruly member of yours, unless you want me to expose you before all 'Way-up! I'd rather not do it if I can get anything like even with you by any other means. I've got a character to lose, and when the truth was out—when men could point at me as your husband—I'd be ashamed to show my face in decent society again!"

And that was the secret! That was why Mrs. Prince Amory turned so ghastly pale when her eyes rested on the face of Jim-jam Jones—the living face of a man whom she had believed dead for many long years!

Years ago, when they were both young—and even when her face looked most haggard, most aged, this woman seemed younger than her actual age—Coraline Esterbrook and Eric Nave were married.

Their friends said that they were born for each other. They both came of rich families, with irreproachable antecedents. Both were handsome and bright, both witty and spirited, both general favorites in the select circles wherein they moved.

But before long there came an awful crash. Not without warning to those who watched and reasoned. Eric Nave was fond of liquor and addicted to high play. Coraline was "fast," and carried flirtation to the extreme verge of propriety. Some said that she had not always kept within the limits, and finally Eric grew convinced that there was at least a reasonable foundation for those flying rumors.

That night the explosion came. Eric, more than half-drunk, charged his wife with her sins, and she flew into one of her mad passions, in the height of which she stabbed him repeatedly in the breast, leaving him apparently dying on the floor, while she hastily gathered up her jewels and fled into the night.

The papers presented an account of an attempted robbery and the serious wounding of a rich and dashing clubman. And to make the story still more pathetic, it added that the sad affair occurred just after the return of the injured man from seeing his fair wife off on the train, bound for a visit to distant relatives.

In private, it was whispered that the wound was received by Eric Nave from a rival, whom he intercepted just as said rival was running off with Mrs. Eric Nave!

Then—no one could say just how or why—Eric Nave disappeared, although his astonished physicians said that any such move was equivalent to suicide. And suicide it was afterward decided, when a body was fished from the river, nearly a month afterward, and identified by many as that of Eric Nave. Among those who identified the body, was the bereaved widow, who had returned by special train immediately on receipt of the sensational accounts of the "robbery" and assault.

Long before the body was found, she had cleared her good name and proven the rumors of an elopement without foundation in fact. She, or somebody else, let it get abroad that she had fled to save her life; that heavy drinking had crazed her husband. And this, too, was not difficult to prove, when his wild orgies and extravagant actions were recalled.

"I was willing enough to let another poor devil fill a grave with my name over it, you see, Coraline," he added, after much that has been hastily outlined here had been more or less openly alluded to by one or the other of the delectable couple. "I didn't even kick at being dubbed a suicide or a lunatic, for getting rid of you was more than an offset for that!"

"Yet you lose little time in putting forward your claims now!"

"Well, I'm older and wiser. I want money, and as I left all to you before, I can bring myself to accept a trifle even from your hands, by calling it simple restitution of a loan. I know that you can't insist on claiming the allegiance of a husband, without putting your little game here in jeopardy. So, taking it all in all, I'm not running so great a risk, after all," he laughed, with an ugly sneer.

"If I give you money, you will go away and leave me in peace?"

"Hardly. I'll hold my peace, and let you work the wires. I'll look on until you prove yourself the wife or widow of Prince Amory. I'll even permit you to rope old Black into calling you wife, if you wish. But then—"

"Go on, Eric."

"Then I'll come to you for a division, as your legal husband. If you make over to me two-thirds of your property, I'll lock my tongue, and the world will never be one whit the wiser."

"Two-thirds!" exclaimed the woman, startled despite the rigid control which she had until now maintained. "You are too modest! Why not demand the other third, Eric? You'd get it just as soon!"

"I know that. If I asked, you could do no less than give. You know that, Coraline?" was the cool response.

"Which makes me marvel at your modesty, Eric," with a laugh, suddenly recovering her composure, outwardly at least.

"It is making you a gift of just so much money, my dear. You were legally married to me. You believed me dead, and so neglected to secure a divorce. You courted and married Prince Amory, then but a boy, and barely out of his teens, though he was rich in his own right. You married him for his money alone, and as soon as you could get it in your hands—which you did with mighty little delay, thanks to his silly love for you—you led him such a dog's life that he was only too glad to run away for good and all."

"Still, the marriage can be proven."

"And so can the divorce which you procured from him," was the instant retort. "That touches you, does it, my dear?" was a sneer as the woman started and uttered a little cry of alarm and anger. "You see, Coraline, I kept a tolerable close watch over your actions, though I was dead and buried. I can trace your career step by step, but I am not anxious to do so, bearing in mind that you are still, in the eyes of the law, my wife."

"If I go back to Black and tell him this; if I point out the proofs to back me up, what comes of your claims? Worse than nothing! Therefore, in holding my tongue and permitting you to play him for a gudgeon, I am just making you a present of so much money."

"If I consent, what security have I that you will not blurt out the truth in one of your drunken fits? I've heard of them, you see."

"The best of security—my own interest in the game," was the prompt retort. "I can cover you with shame and confusion, but by doing so I'd be blowing out my own light."

"I'll agree to give you one-half of all I gain, Eric."

"You have my terms, my dear," was the quick retort. "I'm no Jew. Take it or leave it, and that in a hurry. The longer I talk to you the more I feel like seeing what sort of a corpse you would make! You are twenty years older than you were when I first came upon you, Coraline. I wonder if you would show your real age in a coffin!"

The woman turned still paler, and her blue eyes shone more brightly, but it was after an evil fashion. If Jim-jam Jones only knew it he was running a terrible risk in thus mercilessly pressing his advantage.

"And that man without a name—that man with the face of Prince Amory?" she slowly uttered. "You are alive, as though risen from the grave, Eric. I have learned that Prince Amory was dead as well. Surely he has not risen also? That man is not he?"

"Not a bit of it, my dear. I can take oath to that effect."

"And so seal your fate, you cur!" the woman hissed, reaching out a derringer-armed hand and firing at his heart!

Simultaneously with the report came a sharp cry, and wheeling, Mrs. Amory saw a man leaping toward her with swift steps. She recoiled with a cry of horror as she recognized the Nameless Sport, now more than ever looking like Prince Amory.

Driven to bay, feeling that all was lost, the wretched woman plucked the gleaming dagger from its sheath, raised it above her bosom—but before she could strike her hand was caught from behind.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### UNDER THE WHITE FLAG.

By the time the sun peeped over the hilltops, Ishmael Black had his little army tolerably well in hand, and judiciously distributed about the 'Way-up Mine buildings, under cover, yet from whence they could see and shoot in case of need.

He listened to the report of his men with no outward signs of disappointment when he hastened back from his interview with Mrs. Prince Amory, whatever he may have felt inwardly on hearing that nothing had been seen of George Washington White. A number of others had sought and obtained admission into the buildings, but among them the fat mine-owner was not.

To tell the truth, Ishmael Black had not dared hope anything would come of his cautionary order. He felt assured that White was safely inside the works, and that this rather doubtful stroke of policy had been engineered by him alone, unless the Nameless Sport was also mixed up in it. Still, it was barely possible that he might have been detained in some manner, and it was just as well to mention the matter. If no other end was gained, it would serve to remind the men that there would be no very severe condemnation for the one whose lead or steel should put the fat member forever out of the firm.

Mallet-foot Hennepin was still in command at the stockade, and he promptly answered the summons which Ishmael Black sent through the lips of his lengthy henchman, Two-story Johnson.

"I'm used to talkin' an' doin' business with your betters, you starved-out tapeworm!" he cried, with a queer mixture of dignity, anger and blackguardism. "Go shake yourself an' tell Ishmael Black that ef he wants a powwow he kin step out an' git it his own self!"

"Slingin' on a heap o' airs, ain't ye fer a licked man?" sneered Two-story Johnson.

"You lie when ye say licked, an' you double lie when you h'nt that it was you an' not your gang that saved ye from chawin' dirt like a sheep-killin' cur last night, Two-Story! Drap yer tools an' step out in the cl'ar ground, an' I'll do the same! More'n that, ef I don't make you squeal holy murder inside ten minnits by the watch, I'll agree to march out an' let you uns march in, with never a lick nur a shot!"

"Get George White to say as much, Henne-

pin, and you shall have the meeting you wish!" quickly cried out Ishmael Black, stepping into view.

Mallet-foot hesitated a little, inwardly cursing his hot temper and the taunts of his old enemy which had awakened it anew. Not but what he would gladly have risked all on another fight with the tall henchman of Ishmael Black, but how could that be brought about if Ishmael Black insisted on there being a ratification of the challenge by George Washington White?

"It sticks in his craw!" laughed Two-story Johnson, who, to do him justice, was to the full as eager for another trial as his rival. "He's skeered fer fear his boss'll take him up at his offer!"

"I'll take you down, ef I ever git a chance, you whelp."

"You know you can gain that chance, Hennepin," again interposed Ishmael Black, whose suspicions were gradually growing stronger, although he was yet far from suspecting the actual truth of the case. "Get George White to consent to your trying it on. Get him to come to the front and ratify your challenge. If you are one-half the man you claim to be, he'd ought to jump at the offer, for Johnson is weak as a cat, and couldn't stand up five minutes before a ten-year-old boy."

Mallet-foot Hennepin stepped down behind the stockade and hurriedly consulted with his fellows. As the reader is aware, George White was not with them, nor had the least idea just where he was or what had happened to him. Not one of their number had seen him since he vanished so abruptly when the fight began between Hennepin and Johnson.

"I was a durn fool fer givin' that p'izen sharpseach a chancie to call fer the boss," frankly admitted Mallet-foot.

"Go back an' say the boss won't hear to no sech foolishness."

"But won't he begin to think it sorter queer the boss don't never show up or try to do his own talkin'?" hesitated Hennepin.

"That's the wu'st of it, but what kin we do? We ain't got no rights here, unless workin' under orders o' one o' the bosses. Ef White was with us, it'd be all right enough. He's part owner, an' he's a right to hire men to see that his property ain't abused nur nothin'. Ish Black knows how that is, but ef he was to find out we're playin' on our own hook, you'd hear him reel off the law mighty piert, an' then wade in to execute it, too!"

"Jim's right, pard," added another of the men, seriously. "You've got to git out of it the best way you kin. Bett'r chaw dirt then chaw lead. We've got to hold out long enough to git some sort o' decent tarms out o' the pesky critter, sure!"

It was a bitter pill for him to swallow, but Mallet-foot accepted the consequence of his rash action with the best possible grace. That his decision, or the decision of his boss, was impatiently awaited, was evident enough from the prompt call of Ishmael Black as the White lieutenant showed his head and shoulders above the stockade.

"Well, Hennepin, what word? Is White willing to put his faith on your muscle and grit?"

"No he ain't," growled Mallet-foot, with a chagrin that could not be mistaken for pretense even by an enemy. "He says I'm a durned fool fer thinkin' he would! But I'll do the next best: I'll fight Two-story an' any other man he kin pick out, jest fer fun an' glory."

"That would be simple slaughter, Hennepin, and of course we can't think of it, even for a moment. But I've got another idea that may bear better fruit. Ask White to show his sweet mug for just two minutes. It won't take more than that long for me to make my proposition, and in the end it may save a good many lives. Go tell him, will you?"

Mallet-foot disappeared from view, and it was several minutes before he returned. Meanwhile Ishmael Black was thinking busily.

Ordinarily George White was not so chary of showing himself to the public. If something of a coward, he was also very touchy on that point, and though he might fear a snap shot at his head, should he show it over the top of the stockade, since open war had been declared, surely he would deliver his defiance in voice, if not in person?

"If he don't show up, or let his voice be heard, what then?" mused the leader of the outside force. "Just this: he's not able to do so! He must have got hurt last night, and his men are afraid to let the secret leak out!"

Mallet-foot Hennepin reappeared after considerable delay, saying:

"The boss says he'll see you durned afore he sticks up his head fer a pot-shot! He says ef you want to talk to him, you kin come in here whar he is."

"And come out again—in what shape, my fine fellow?" laughed Black, more than ever convinced that his supposition was the correct one.

"That cock won't fight, Hennepin! I could trust you, since you are man enough to show your face, but a coward that hides behind his men, and talks only through their lips, is a horse of another color. Tell your boss that

when I come to call on him, it will be for something else than talking!"

"We'll be here when ye do come, I reckon. Mebbe we kin keep ye from falling to sleep on the way, an' mebbe we kin putt ye to sleep, one o' the two," was the prompt retort. "When ye take a start, let Two-story Johnson come with ye. I want to see him, *bad!*"

"Johnson will be there, no doubt. And, Hennepin?"

"You say it!"

"Do you happen to have a doctor among you?"

"What ef we hain't?"

"Well, if White should get worse, I'll be happy to send him in medical aid, that's all," with a short, meaning laugh. "It would be a thousand pities to have him die without trying on the necktie I've twisted up for his especial benefit!"

Mallet-foot stared in open-mouthed amazement for a moment, but then a light broke upon his rather sluggish brain, and he had to stifle a laugh of delight as he managed to reply:

"You're too mighty kind, boss! Ef we want a doctor, we'll let you know, though!"

Ishmael Black turned away to consult with a few of his most trusted men, while Mallet-foot stepped down under cover to congratulate his fellows on the evident mistake into which their enemy had fallen.

"Better that then to hit on the truth, boys," he chuckled. "Long's he b'lieves the boss is here, we stan' some sort o' show o' gittin' out on half-way decent tarms!"

"I wish the cuss *was* here!" growled one of the men, whose bloody bandages showed that he had not passed through the fight of the past night without harm. "It's fer him we're fightin', ain't it? Then why ain't he here to take his sheer? Whar is he? Hidin' in some hole, only thinkin' how he kin save his fat karkidge from gittin' hurt!"

"They hain't got hold o' him, an' that's what I was gittin' skeered of the wu'st," muttered Hennepin, his brows contracting.

"They would hev him, though, ef I hed the say so!" snarled the wounded man. "I'd give him over to Black *too* quick, ef he'd agree to count us out o' the row fer good an' all!"

"That's what you say, but it ain't what you think, Tom," retorted Mallet-foot, with a frown. "Mebbe the boss 'll turn up all right. Mebbe somethin' hes happened to keep him away, but he won't go back on us that bad! He'll show up, when he kin do the most fer our side!"

But Hennepin was almost alone in this belief. The besieged party were beginning to reflect, and to look ahead to the end. Almost without provisions, they could not hope to make a protracted fight of it. And the more blood that was shed, the heavier the reckoning they would have to pay in the end.

If White had been with them, little or none of this feeling would have found birth. They would have felt in duty bound to stand by him to the last, and would have fought while a single man remained able to handle a rifle or revolver. But he was not with them. He had abandoned them just when his presence and his voice would have done the most good. And the greatest possible crime in the estimation of such men as these, is personal cowardice in a leader.

Ishmael Black was still in consultation with his picked men, among whom, of course, was Two-story Johnson, when word was passed along to him that a man with a white flag was signaling them from the rear.

"Answer it, and bring him here at once," was the quick response.

The order was promptly obeyed, and a savage curse broke from the lips of Two-story Johnson as he caught sight of the man under the white flag: the Nameless Sport.

He sprung to his feet, pistol in hand, but before he could secure an aim, Ishmael Black caught his wrist and bent it forcibly up and backward, sternly crying:

"Try that again, Johnson, and I'll blow your brains out! Don't you see he's under a flag of truce?"

"Just hold your horses, Johnson, until I've discharged my duty, and then I'll give you all the git-even you can digest," lightly cried the man without a name, with his peculiar, cold smile.

"What is your duty? Who sends you? What do you want, anyway?" a little sharply demanded Ishmael Black, scowling at these free and easy airs.

"First, permission to pass through your lines, to consult with the gentlemen penned up in yonder," nodding toward the stockade.

"What for? What business can you have with them?"

"Well, I might remind you that I openly espoused the White side of this little squabble, but I don't suppose that would be much of a recommendation to mercy," laughed the Nameless Sport, easily.

"Hardly!" with a cold, ugly sneer. "If you are bent on being hanged, we can accommodate you right now, without all the trouble of taking you out of the stockade again!"

"And I'd make a charming pendulum, wouldn't I? But, if you are just as willing, I'd

rather not. Hanging spoils a man's complexion, and I'm rather particular about mine."

"It thickens a man's tongue, too!" with a grim smile and bow.

"Another reason why I'd rather not. And what I don't like myself, I hate to see crowded upon another fellow. Which, being interpreted, means that if you grant me permission to pass through your lines and spend half an hour with the gentlemen cooped up yonder, I pledge you my word as a man of honor that they shall listen to any fair terms of compromise which you may offer."

"You are taking a good deal upon yourself, it seems to me!" muttered Black, frowning. "George White himself couldn't offer to do more."

"Nor would he offer one-half as much, with his own free will," was the cool response. "But this is not a question of George Washington White, just now. It is whether or no you will grant me the leave I ask."

"You have it, sir," with the grim addition: "If you forget to come back, all right! We'll come and fetch you, presently."

"Provided I was willing to be fetched, you should add, my dear fellow," was the cool retort, as the Nameless Sport, raising the white flag over his head, stepped briskly toward the stockade.

"Don't be in sech a hurry, pardner!" called out Mallet-foot, with a rifle thrust through one of the narrow loop-holes. "I know the boss called you a fri'nd, but you played a mighty on-fri'ndly part last night, fer all that! What ye want, anyway?"

"A few words with you, Hennepin. Keep me covered if you prefer, until I can get close enough to whisper a word in your private ear," the Nameless Sport replied, not ceasing to advance in the least.

Curious, perplexed, Ishmael Black watched him, frowning more deeply as he saw the flag and bearer admitted to the stockade.

"There's something crooked going on!" he muttered, uneasily. "What does it all mean? Is it only a trick, or can that infernal s'ellow bring about the settlement as easily as he pretends? Curse that face! I'd ought to have held him fast until I knew for sure just who and what he really is!"

It was too late to remedy this mistake, if mistake it was, and Ishmael Black was obliged to content himself as best he might by pacing restlessly to and fro, casting frequent glances toward the stockade and wondering what it all meant.

Even before the half-hour mentioned as a limit by the Nameless Sport expired, he was seen leaving the stockade, still under the protecting folds of the white flag. Ishmael Black advanced a few paces to meet him, on the impulse of the moment, but then fell back again, schooling his hard features so they betrayed little or nothing of the strong emotions which he really felt.

"You see, Mr. Black, I have returned, and that without waiting for you to fetch me," coolly uttered the Nameless Sport, tossing the white flag aside as though it could be of no further service to him.

"It was a natural doubt, under the circumstances, but I ask your pardon for giving it such blunt expression, sir," gravely responded the mine-owner.

"That wipes it all out, my dear sir," with a return of his light, easy grace as he grasped the bony hand and shook it heartily. "I have an apology to make and forgiveness to ask, too, in good time. But first, I wish to state for the benefit of all around, that if you are disposed to bear lightly on the mistaken—not erring, when you come to look at the case in an honest light—men in yonder, I can place you in peaceable possession of the 'Way-up Mine the moment our terms are accepted."

An impulsive cheer broke from the Blackites, but their chief was cooler, though a vivid light leaped into his black eyes.

"Do you say this by authority of George White?" he demanded.

"Mr. White will not contradict any terms or conditions I agree upon for the part of the men in yonder stockade," was the deliberate response. "You shall be perfectly satisfied on that point before you make a single concession. And as the shortest method of reaching a complete understanding, I ask you to step a little aside, where we can talk without being interrupted."

"I have no terms to offer which I fear to let these honest fellows overhear," coldly retorted the mine-owner.

Another cheer followed this announcement, the Nameless Sport smilingly awaiting until the ebullition subsided, when he replied:

"Nor do I ask anything of the kind, Mr. Black. I simply ask you to give me a private audience for a few minutes, but I'm not trying to bind you to secrecy. You have my free permission to repeat every word I utter, just as soon as I am through. Is not that honest enough?"

"On those conditions I'll listen to you, sir," was the reply, after a slight hesitation.

Turning on his heel, the Nameless Sport led the way to a retired spot, where they could talk

without being eavesdropped, while still under the eyes of the curious, interested besiegers.

"First, tell me how is White?"

"As well as could be expected, under the circumstances."

"Then he was hurt in the row last night? I knew it!"

"I'm not quite sure I catch your meaning, my dear sir," responded the Nameless Sport, with a puzzled air.

"I thought you meant open work?" a little roughly uttered Black.

"So I do. What makes you think different now?"

"Why are you trying to hide the truth? I know that White is hurt or dead, else he would have shown up when I tried so often to make him show his face above the stockade!"

"White is not inside the works. He is lying at the bottom of one of your deserted mines, with irons on his wrists and a couple of men guarding him, who have strict orders to blow his brains out if he attempts to escape, or if there is any attempt made to rescue him."

For once in his life Ishmael Black was actually paralyzed with amazement. He stared at the handsome face of the Nameless Sport with distended eyes and open mouth. For the moment he was literally struck dumb.

"If you ask why this is so—if you ask why I have treated your partner after this fashion—perhaps a glance over this bit of paper will serve your purpose, Mr. Black," coldly added the strange being, at the same time unfolding a document and extending it toward the other.

Ishmael Black took the paper, still like one in a dream, but after the first few lines, all his usual powers seemed restored to him. His blazing eyes swept rapidly over the written words, an occasional oath, deep and bitter, grating through his clinched teeth.

With a cold smile the Nameless Sport watched him, and as his eyes reached the signature at the foot of the paper, he held out another. This time he spoke while the mine-owner was reading:

"You are at liberty to tell your men everything, if you see fit to do so, but as a personal favor to me, I ask you to keep this part of the business secret until this evening. By that time, all my plans will be perfected, and I'll give 'Way-up a sensation which her citizens will not readily forget!"

"And you?" muttered the mine-owner, passing the paper back with trembling hands. You?"

"Call me Prince Amory, if you can't get along without a handle," was the light, laughing response. "But it is not a question of myself, just now, but of those poor devils in yonder! They've followed a mighty poor master, thus far, and they begin to realize that fact. They are ready and even eager to swear off, if they can come out without having to fight their way. Which is it, Mr. Black?"

"Whatever you say," was the subdued response. "Name your conditions. That much, at least, is owin' to you."

"And to them, for that matter. Like the best of us, they made a mistake, but the blame of that lies with the man who tempted them with big wages. They thought they were serving the right side."

"What shall I tell the boys?" hesitated Black, with humility strange in one of his harsh, overbearing nature. "Or will you—"

For answer the Nameless Sport strode briskly over to where the Black party was collected, and spoke to them tersely:

"Gentlemen, the trouble at 'Way-up is a thing of the past! George Washington White admits that he was in the wrong, and declares that he alone is to blame for whatever harm his followers may have done. Your chief is ready and willing to forgive them, and as he is the one principally concerned, you ought to be willing to forgive and forget. If not—if any man among you tries to crow over or crowd any of the men in yonder stockade for the part they have played in this trouble, that man has got to settle with me."

"And with me," coldly interjected Ishmael Black.

"After which I reckon there'll be precious little left of said man," laughed the Nameless Sport, catching up the white flag and swinging it in a circle above his head.

At this signal the stockade gate was flung open, and the besieged party emerged, looking serious and just a little sullen, but not for long.

"Shake hands and agree to let the past be past, my lads!" cried the Nameless Sport, heartily. "And I want you one and all to promise me you will gather in front of the hotel, at dusk, this evening. I've got a little speech to make—a sort of lecture, illustrated with living examples—and I promise you sha'n't fall asleep over it!"

#### CHAPTER XIX.

##### A LECTURE, WITH LIVING ILLUSTRATIONS.

"Is it—kin—I'm a pigtailed John from the furdest corner o' Chinydom ef it ain't, though! Whooray! When Johnny comes marchin' home ag'in—an' I fetched him back, didn't I? Ef I

only could—an' I *will*, too! Cl'ar the way! Brake out o' kilter, an' breechin' done bu'sted! Got to go, don't ye see?"

Half-wild or wholly drunk, Cap Hicks, who, owing to the "trouble," had not made his regular "run" that day, plunged forward through the eager, expectant crowd, despite all efforts to check and squelch him.

He was not the first one who had stared in doubt that turned to wonder, then almost into conviction, as the tall, handsome man finally appeared on the veranda of the hotel front to deliver the "lecture" he had promised them.

There was a big bonfire blazing high in the middle of the street, a little to the left of the hotel, balanced by another to the right. At each corner of the veranda were heaped up fire-crates adding their quota to the illumination, so that the faces of the crowd, as well as those of all who might step upon the veranda, were rendered as distinctly visible as though the noonday sun was shining.

For some time before the falling of twilight, Ishmael Black and the Nameless Sport had taken complete possession of the hotel, the dark mine-owner placing a number of his trustiest men on guard, although it was noted that Two-story Johnson was not among them. Indeed, there was some little feeling expressed when the truth came out on examination; that none of these guards had been citizens of 'Way-up for more than a month or two, at the outside. Some had favored the White party, while others had been just as zealous on behalf of the Black interests.

The first ripple of excitement came when a small table was placed on the veranda, in front of the bar-room door, the windows of which were mysteriously draped and darkened as though to cut off all possible sight of what was taking place within.

Then Ishmael Black and several of the guards came out and formed on each side of the table, a little to the rear, grim and silent, rifles in hand, as though to keep order by force, if needs be.

Next came a tall, graceful figure, which had already grown familiar to the eyes of the crowd, although hardly more than four-and-twenty hours had elapsed since it first entered 'Way-up. The figure of the man without a name—of the Nameless Sport.

But the face! What had altered that so?—ah! The full black beard was gone! What a difference that made after all! How marvelously like Prince Amory the fellow did look, to be sure! If his hair was only yellow, and his mustaches and his skin not so dark.

Then it was that Cap Hicks broke forth into half-mad delight, plunging forward as though his salvation depended upon his immediate connection with the Nameless Sport.

Only to be met as he rushed up the steps by a couple of the men on guard and rushed into the hotel before he had time to utter a single word of the thousand that fairly choked his organs of speech.

The Nameless Sport hesitated, then vanished for a few moments, which were occupied by the eager spectators in discussing the little incident, which more than one among them was inclined to think went far to explain that marvelous resemblance of face, voice and figure, to those of the runaway partner. Others were just as ready to argue to the direct contrary, and from arguments might easily enough have passed on to fisticuffs, particularly as Black and White partisans were mingling freely together in the crowd.

But instantly all dispute was hushed as the Nameless Sport once more came into view, tapping on the pine table with his knuckles as an appeal for attention as his keen blue eyes roved quickly over the goodly crowd assembled.

"Gentlemen," he began, his voice clear and distinct, although hardly raised above a conversational pitch. "I am both glad and proud to see you all gathered before me this evening, quiet and orderly. Not alone because it is in response to the invitation which I gave you, but because it shows you can forgive as well as fight."

"Every las' one, 'cept it is Two-story Johnson!" cried out Mallet-foot, with dogged honesty. "An' I'll fergive him jes' as soon as I lick the stuffin' out o' the critter—so I will!"

"You can't lick one side—"

"But I can, and I will, too, if you fellows don't hold your hush until I have finished my little lecture," interposed the Nameless Sport as the insulted Johnson started for his blunt rival, with "blood in his eye!" "When I've finished, we'll make a ring and let you fight it out until one or the other agrees to stay whipped. If that isn't enough—"

"I'll take a hand in," sharply interposed Ishmael Black, with a forward move that plainly meant business. "Johnson, hold your tongue. Hennepin, if you break out in a new plac', I'll put you where the dogs can't bite you—and that so quick it'll make your head swim!"

It was not often that Ishmael Black descended to use the vernacular so liberally, but when he did it was proof positive that he was in earnest all over. And the rivals slunk back, stilled, if not placated.

"My friends," resumed the Nameless Sport, seemingly forgetting the little disturbance as completely as though it had never taken place. "I've got so much to say, so many points to explain, that I hardly know just where to begin. When all is said, I'm afraid you'll think you never listened to a lecture, illustrated or otherwise, quite so disconnected as this. But if it does go a little by fits and jerks, lay it to my first appearance on the platform, not to my carelessness.

"First, I've heard a number of you expressing wonder as to what can have happened to George Washington White. Some of you fancied that he got so badly frightened last night that he ran away and either broke his neck in the dark, or else traveled so far that it will take him a week to get back!

"George did run away, and it was as much to get out of danger as anything else, I reckon. He was willing enough to let his men do the fighting, if he could capture the *oro*; as for the honor, I really doubt if he would recognize the word, should he meet it in company."

The Nameless Sport paused to gaze keenly into the interested but somewhat puzzled faces of his audience. He noted some grave, even angry faces, as though all of the White party had not given over their trust in their chief, strangely as he had deserted them.

"I like you all the better for it, boys," he said frankly. "I know you think I'm kicking a man when he's down, but if you hear me out and then say I'm not fully justified, I'll submit to any penance you may see fit to impose upon me. Even to giving George Washington White the hand of goodfellowship—and a more bitter humiliation to an honest man could not be devised.

"I publicly brand this person as a thief, a forger, a perjurer! I declare to you that he offered money to a man ten times his superior as a man, to murder one whom he was afraid to assassinate himself!"

The audience swayed back and forth, half-stifled cries and ejaculations breaking from their lips.

Truly, there was little danger of their falling asleep over this "lecture."

"Those are some of the crimes which I charge against this George Washington White, my friends," added the Nameless Sport, after his uplifted hand had reduced the crowd to comparative silence. "Of course I am fully prepared to prove each and every word of them. I'd be worse than a fool to stand up before you to utter charges which I could not fully substantiate. I asked you to gather here this evening mainly to convince you that a greater rascal, in a contemptible way, than George White never drew the breath of life. And that you may see how complete is my confidence, I'll introduce my first living illustration."

As he spoke, the door behind him opened, and three figures emerged. George Washington White was the central figure, pale after a livid sort of fashion, trembling, chap-fallen, dirty and disreputable-looking enough.

Two men held him by the arms, though the clear ruddy firelight was reflected from the polished handcuffs that declared his captivity.

"First, my friends," resumed the Nameless Sport, "we'll take up the charge of theft. Witness, who stole the money belonging to the firm of Black, White & Amory?"

"I did," huskily admitted the prisoner.

"Why did you lay the charge at the door of Prince Amory?"

"To protect myself."

"How came Prince Amory to disappear so conveniently for your purpose? Did he go away of his own free will?"

"No. He was—was killed!"

There came a low, but growing muttering among the crowd at these damning admissions. A sound that one never can forget who has once listened to it growing and deepening, all the more terrible from being inarticulate, all the more to be dreaded from its perfect freedom from oaths, curses or plain threats. A sound that can be stilled if taken in time by men who understand without fearing its meaning, but a sound that only blood and death can appease if that golden moment be permitted to pass by without action prompt and decisive.

The Nameless Sport drew a brace of heavy revolvers and placed them on the little table in front of himself. Ishmael Black stepped to his side, his hands armed after the same fashion. The guards deliberately cocked their repeating-rifles, and the two men grasping White had each a revolver in their free hands.

"You can't do it if you try, gentlemen," coolly cried the Nameless Sport, half-laughing as he glanced over their ranks. "We are here to right the wronged, it is true, but we've here to protect our prisoner, as well. Lynch law is good enough where there's no better to be had, but it is out of the place in 'Way-up, and no one will more readily admit this than you, when you take a second thought. If not—well, I trust you are too white, too sensible, to make us prove it?"

Bold enough without being too defiant. Appealing to their own better judgment, without showing too great an anxiety for a favorable

decision. Better words could hardly have been chosen, and the effect was speedily apparent.

The muttering died away. The men glanced one at another, each ready enough to act if another would take the initiative, but no one among them all ready to invite the first shot. And when a mob hesitates, it is lost.

The Nameless Sport knew this, and at once dismissed the subject as unworthy a second thought. In obedience to a motion of his hand, the two guards led White back into the hotel.

"Just to show you that I've no desire to trample on a man when he's down in the mire, gentlemen," he explained, quietly. "I flatter myself that I can tell the story just as clearly as White himself, and it won't strain my throat nearly so much."

"You heard his admissions. I can prove the truth of each and all of them. I promise to do so, if you have the patience to hear me out."

"George White first conceived the idea of robbing the firm, before it was discovered that there was a fresh bonanza at the bottom of the 'Way-up Mine. He was discouraged at the seeming exhaustion of the mines, and thought he was growing too old to continue the fight for wealth when by a single adroit stroke he might make himself comfortable for the rest of his life. And so, he laid his plans to make it appear as though Prince Amory was the real defaulter and forger.

"Never mind the little details. You can hear them when there is no more time to waste. Enough that, to make all sure, George White knew that Prince Amory must disappear beyond the possibility of reappearing to clear his name."

"White was afraid to kill Prince Amory with his own hands, and by what he thought a peculiarly lucky chance, he found out a secret in the past life of his victim, that gave him the desired opening."

"Many of you know that Prince Amory was in love with Miss Turner. You may or may not know that he sought her hand in marriage. For some reason which he can best explain, Mr. Turner objected to this suit, and objected most decidedly to the young man himself. Therefore, when George White went to him and showed him documents which apparently proved Prince Amory an infernal scoundrel, in that he was seeking to entrap the young lady into a pretended marriage with one who had a wife who was still living, Red Turner naturally swore that he would get even for this worse than insult. George White offered him one thousand dollars down the moment he could swear to him that Prince Amory was dead. And he invented an excuse which would take Prince Amory to a spot mighty convenient for just such a little accident."

The Nameless Sport paused and made another signal. The door behind him opened, and Red Turner emerged, cold, hard, emotionless as ever.

He did not wait for the lecturer to question him, but facing the interested crowd, spoke with his usual imperturbability:

"I've hearn what this gentleman said, an' so fur's I know, he's stuck to the plain trail o' truth. The jedge did come to me with that story. He did show me them papers, which 'peared to make out young Amory a dirty sneak an' wuss! He did offer me money to kill the man, but I was too hot inside jest then to raally take in his full meanin'."

"He told me whar I might meet Amory, an' when the time come, I was thar. I didn't stop to ax no questions. I felt sure he was tryin' to fool my gal, an' I drew a bead on him as cool an' as sure as I ever did on a buck or a doe."

"He keeled over when I pulled, an' when I went up to him, I see he was shot through an' through, right whar I kivered him. He locked dead enough, only fer a little sort o' shiverin' all over, sech as you see when a buck falls in a heap with the lead straight through its heart. But I was too mad to let a chance slip. I drew my butcher an' stuck him twice or three times, to the han'le."

"He quit shiverin' then, an' I set down alongside him, waitin' an' watchin' ontel I see the blue-white glaze come over his eyes. Then, to kiver it over, I picked him up an' drapped him into the river, jest bove whar the rocks breaks in the Long Riffle. I see him tossin' down through them, an' knowed he'd never come to light ag'in; leastways, not in a shape that any o' his fri'nds'd recognize."

"You disposed of his body after this fashion in order to play into the hands of George White, I suppose, Mr. Turner?"

"I never thought o' him, then, furder then that he was playin' to git the man out o' the way. What I was thinkin' mostly of was my gal. I knowed she'd take it hard, but I thought it'd come easier to her ef she b'lieved he hed run away, then ef she knowed he was dead. I did think she'd come to hate and despise him, when she hearn he was a runaway thief."

"You told George White what you had done?"

"He come to ax me, so I told him."

"He paid you the money for killing Prince Amory?"

"He offered it, but I laughed at him. I killed

fer revinge, not fer money. Ef it was money—only yest'day, he come an' offered me twice as much ef I'd kill Ishmael Black, thar!"

"You declined the temptation, of course?"

"They wasn't no temptation. It wasn't my fight, an' so I told the jedge. Ef they was blood on my han's, an' I didn't deny it, money didn't putt it thar, but love fer my gal. I shet him up, an' he went off."

As the Nameless Sport made a motion that signified he had no further questions to ask, Red Turner stepped back into the hotel.

"There was just a trace of truth in the old story raked up by George White, my friends," resumed the Nameless Sport. "Prince Amory was married early in life, and, like the vast majority of such matches, where the woman is much the oldest, it turned out an unlucky one. He was tolerably rich, and the woman wanted his money more than she did him. She got it, too. And getting it, she showed her claws so plainly that Prince Amory concluded to give all up to her, and start life anew."

"He felt a little ashamed of his folly in marrying in haste to repent at leisure, and although he heard, after a year or so, that his wife had applied for a divorce, he made no resistance. He took care to be sure she obtained it, and then he felt freer than he had since the ill-starred day when he made her his wife."

"He came out West, and in default of anything better, took to prospecting, hoping to make a strike that would set him up in life again. You know how he did it—more by blind luck than science. You know that as a result of that strike, 'Way-up sprung into existence. You are aware of what followed. You know that the firm of Black, White & Amory made money fast, until the bottom seemed to drop out of the whole thing."

"Naturally enough, Prince Amory was reticent as to his past life. There was nothing in it to be proud of, he thought, although he meant to tell everything to Miss Turner as soon as he had won her consent and the consent of her father to their marriage. You know how he was prevented from making this confession."

"You know, too, yesterday a lady came to 'Way-up, claiming to be the wife or widow of Prince Amory. This lady is the same of whom I have told you; the woman Prince Amory married, and who afterward obtained a divorce from him on the plea of ill usage and desertion. She denies the divorce, but even so, she can hardly claim to be the wife of young Amory. Just why, you shall see for yourselves."

Again the door opened in obedience to a signal and Jim-jam Jones stepped into view, seemingly well as ever, and far more sober than any citizen then present could remember having seen him before.

"I am the reason, gentlemen," he spoke up promptly. "I hate to make the admission, but it appears that the cause of even-handed justice requires that humiliation of me. I am the first, undivorced, and therefore only legal husband of this self-styled Mrs. Prince Amory. I left her, to save my life. She stabbed me half a dozen times, and then ran off with a handsomer man. I left the house in the face of my physicians who swore I was mad to risk such a move. And when, a few weeks later, a disfigured body was fished out of the river, it was buried as mine. I gave no signs, counting myself well rid of the woman, and as she never suspected the truth, she didn't take the trouble to get a divorce."

"I saw and recognized her here, just as she did me. I thought I'd let her play the game out if she would divide decently, and so I told her, when she made an appointment to meet me this morning."

"I knew what sharp claws she carried, and before I went to keep that appointment, I improvised a sort of undershirt of a couple of saw blades, bent around my body and fastened behind. It was lucky I did, for the cat tried, not her claws, this time, but a derringer on me."

"The shot made me stagger, but the lead glanced off. Then this gentleman put in an appearance, and though the lady tried to perforate herself with her bit of a dagger, he checked her hand; I should say, one of his men interfered at his orders."

"Naturally, the trouble was inquired into, and when I learned just what right he had to ask questions, I told my little story, much as I have given it to you, but in extenso. He seemed to think it was worth repeating, and to oblige him, I appear before you, gentlemen!"

With a graceful bow, Jim-jam Jones fell back and vanished inside.

Almost before the astonished and bewildered spectators could regain their breath, another witness appeared before them, decidedly more nervous and less at ease than the last. But Adam Fanshaw knew that the game was lost beyond the ghost of a doubt, and he wisely resolved to make the best of a precious bad bargain.

"Tell your story in your own way, Mr. Fanshaw," coldly uttered the Nameless Sport, adding: "But compress the details as much as possible, without making your recital too obscure. Time presses."

"I am a lawyer, gentlemen," began the now crestfallen schemer. "As a lawyer, I regret to

say that I have become mixed up in this unfortunate affair, solely through—"

"Come to the point, if you please, my dear sir!"

"One of my clients, James Anthony Morse, died, leaving a vast fortune, but stubbornly declining to make a will, as I often urged him. Of course the money he left would fall to his next-of-kin. A careful search failed to find any of his blood, nearer than the son of his only nephew, the father of Prince Amory."

"This search brought me in contact with a lady who assured me she was the wife of Prince Amory, who had disappeared from sight and hearing. In trying to trace him up, I stumbled across the records of a divorce, obtained for desertion and ill-usage, in a distant city."

"Right there I fell from grace, gentlemen! I listened to the voice of the charmer, and promised to help her prove her right to the property, in case the husband did not turn up, alive."

"By another accident I learned of a Prince Amory who was largely interested in silver mines, and at once sent out a trusty agent to investigate. He returned and reported that my man had skipped out as a defaulter and forger, though there were some who believed he had met with foul play of some sort."

"That gave us the clew we wanted, and we came here, with a double game in view. One was to secure proof, real or manufactured, that Prince Amory was dead, when his widow would naturally come in for the fortune left behind by James Anthony Morse. The other was to claim her thirds in the mining property, for my agent had heard rumors of great though concealed discoveries having been made."

"A bold game, which does great credit to your audacity, however little it speaks for your honesty, Mr. Fanshaw," bowed the Nameless Sport. "Of course, as the lawyer in charge of the estate, you would offer precious little resistance to the claims of the supposed widow?"

"Were I to deny the imputation, you would not believe me, sir!"

"I most assuredly would not!" was the blunt retort. "And to put you out of your suspense at once, I'll simply say that you will have to remain under watch until Prince Amory can accompany you home to settle in full with you. As you walk straight from this time on, so will you be handled with gloves. You can go."

Adam Fanshaw beat a retreat, amid the hoots and groans of the audience, who seemed even less favorably impressed with him than any of other "living illustrations."

"And now, gentlemen," added the Nameless Sport, his voice growing grave and almost tender, "I have but a few more words to say to you, as a group. You have listened to me, and to my witnesses, with far more order and sympathy than I anticipated. I trust you will not be less pleased when I tell you that Red Turner is not guilty of murder!"

Although the citizens were in a measure prepared for this announcement, it seemed to overwhelm them with surprise. There were exclamations and muttered words of wonder as they interchanged glances. There was one or two unsteady, uncertain cheers, which might possibly have grown into a ringing shout, had not the Nameless Sport lifted his hand and motioned for silence.

"It was not his fault, for he did his work thoroughly, as he ever does," resumed the Nameless Sport, with a smile that blunted the edge of the remark. "Remember he was performing what he held a duty as sacred as it was desperate and dangerous. He believed that Prince Amory meant to ruin his only child, by beguiling her into a mock marriage, only to cast her aside after he had sated his passions. And when you remember this—when you bear in mind that Red Turner not only refused the gold George White offered him for that killing: when you bear in mind his proud refusal to murder another man for money—you will feel just as proud of and willing to forgive him his deed, as I do this moment!"

His speech was so earnest, the sentiment they contained was so readily appreciated at its real worth, that this time the united cheer did come, making the hills echo again with the rolling sounds.

"I thank you, gentlemen," added the Nameless Sport, his tones just a little uncertain at first. "And I thank you all the more heartily because Red Turner has not the death of Prince Amory on his hands, after all! Prince Amory escaped with life, though it is a miracle that he lived long enough to touch the water above the Long Riffle! Just how he escaped; how he lay for months without reason, a madman; who saved and nursed him back to life; you shall all learn, when there is more time to spare. Enough that he lived. That he recovered his reason, and resolved to come back to 'Way-up to clear his fair fame. And to claim more than that! To claim this!" with a glad smile as the door opened again and Kate Turner glided forth, to be clasped to his bosom!

#### CHAPTER XX.

"DIDN'T I TELL YE SO?"

THEN the cheering did burst forth, without sign or warning, in such perfect time that the

mighty sound seemed to come from a single throat. White partisans or Black adherents, it mattered not. They were alike men with manly feelings and manly sympathies when the rough outer crust was once broken.

They had accepted the invitation of the man whom until then they had known only as the Nameless Sport, looking forward to something out of the ordinary. They had not been disappointed. Surprise after surprise had been sprung upon them, but this last was the best of all!

Perhaps it was the ruddy light of the fires, or it may have been the excitement alone that rendered them less keen-eyed, but nearly every man present was ready to take oath that Kate Turner had never looked handsomer, healthier, or happier than she did at that moment, as the strong arm of the Nameless Sport drew her to his side, his head bending to press a kiss upon her lips, then rising with a half-laughing, half-serious toss.

"This is what Prince Amory came back to 'Way-up for, my good friends," he cried, his voice filled with a sweet, proud triumph. "And now, if there is a man among you all who still believes Prince Amory is a thief, forger, and cowardly runaway, speak out clear and distinct!"

Silence, deep and unbroken as that of the grave.

And had a man ventured to lift his voice as desired just then, he would certainly have been open to the charge of committing suicide. And nine-tenths of every weapon in the crowd would have leaped forward to make that suicide a complete success.

"Not a word? Then forever after hold your peace," laughed the Nameless Sport, with a proud, glad moisture in his great eyes as he added:

"And one word more, my friends: If there is a man among you all who doubts that Prince Amory is living and no ghost, I invite him to step forward and clasp Prince Amory's hand."

"After me is manners, consarn ye all!" came shirily from the rear, as the bar-room door was flung open, and Cap Hicks came plunging out to claim the reward justly due his complete faith in the man who had lifted him up out of the slough of despond when all others passed by on the other side. "Fu'st grip is mine, ef I hev to fight fer it!"

It was his, firm and true, strong and affectionate. And not only Prince Amory—no longer a nameless adventurer—but Kate Turner as well, testified their faith and love for the bent, wrinkled, uncouth stage-driver.

"Didn't I tell ye so? Didn't I say from git-up tell stop-short that you all was durned blind-eyed moles, that couldn't see a inch afore your noses?" cried Cap Hicks, dancing about the veranda like a pea on a hot griddle, laughing and crying at one and the same time. "Didn't I stick up fur the boss when you durned contrairy galoots was throwin' dirt all over—"

"Don't kick a man when he's down, Cap," laughingly interposed Prince Amory, checking the half-mad driver with a single touch of his hand. "You were right, but they thought they were right, and it's only one word difference. Think—with this as my reward!" and his left arm drew the blushing, sobbing maiden still closer to his heart. "Can I hold a grudge?"

"Ef ye did, I'd feel monstrous like lickin' of ye my own self!" spluttered Cap Hicks, falling back, but unable to suppress a final:

"Didn't I tell ye so, durn ye all!"

The story is told. What need to dwell on each remaining event? Why tediously follow "The Nameless Sport" through his long account of his marvelous escape from death; of how he was found, miles below the Long Riffle, by a wandering prospector, who thought to give another unfortunate decent burial, but who was skilled in the healing art sufficiently to detect the faint, flickering remnant of life.

That remnant of life was carefully, assiduously fanned and nursed until death gave over the struggle as vain, though the miner-physician began to doubt if he had done well after all. For months his patient was insane. Not violent, but his mind was a perfect blank. He could not speak, he simply lived and ate and drank and slept. His bodily powers came back to him, but that was all.

The prospector kept the secret to himself, not because he knew how much depended on secrecy, but because he was on the scent of a valuable discovery, and he feared to awaken curiosity until his "find" was secured beyond a doubt.

And so it came that no one at 'Way-up learned aught of the marvelous escape, but all save the two men who had planned the death of Prince Amory, and the one true friend, Cap Hicks, believed him a criminal ingrate.

One morning in Denver, whither his kindly rescuer and preserver had taken him, Prince Amory awoke to reason. It came through his overhearing his own name, coupled with a brief recital of his crime. The shock was so great that he dropped to the floor like a man suddenly touched by the hand of death.

Before that night was spent he knew all that

had been laid at his door, and in return he told his friend how devilishly false were the charges against him. The manner of his finding, the nature of his injuries, all went to confirm his story, and the prospector promised to lend him every aid in retrieving his good name.

And so it came about that Prince Amory sent true and trusty detectives to 'Way-up ahead of him, to pave the way for his return. He bade them take sides in seeming with each of the two factions, the better to learn all that might be of aid to him in proving the vile plot against his good name and against his life. They did their work well. They kept the factions inflamed against each other, but contrived to stall off a fight. They were some of them at the barricade when the stage was stopped by Two-story Johnson, and probably this knowledge lent "The Nameless Sport" no little of the cool confidence he there displayed. It was the detectives who captured George Washington White, and who checked the attempt at self-murder when Mrs. Prince Amory missed the life of Jim-jam Jones. It was—

But why continue?

No sooner was Prince Amory through with his explanations, than Mallet-foot Hennepin reminded him of the promise he had given at the beginning of his "lecture." Two-story Johnson was just as willing, and after Red Turner had taken his daughter away, the two rivals were turned into a ring of cheering friends and allowed to "have it out."

Mallet-foot came off victorious, though in scarcely a presentable condition, for Johnson fought hard and stubbornly; and it was his hand that assisted the giant to regain his feet, his hand that led him to the bar and poured out two glasses of liquor, holding one to the lips of the blinded giant, even as he drank himself.

"That settles it between us, Two-story," he mumbled as well as he could through his nearly toothless jaws. "We've fit, an' now we're good friends forever! Tip us your daddle, old pard!"

There was an interview between the partners that same night, when the agreement which George Washington White signed—the same which Prince Amory showed Ishmael Black before the capitulation of the men holding the stockade—was formally ratified.

On condition that he was forgiven his theft and forgeries, White signed over all his rights and title in the mining property to his two partners. In addition, he signed a full confession of his crimes, and left the paper in their hands as a weapon for use in case he should ever attempt to trouble them or dispute the conveyance.

Then, still under the shades of night, he was freed from his irons and escorted safely out of town, to go—no man knew or cared whither.

The next day Adam Fanshaw and his fair if frail client also made full admission, and the latter shook the dust of 'Way-up from her dainty shoes as the stage rolled out of town.

Not driven by Cap Hicks, however! He had been "promoted." He was no longer to make the run from 'Way-up to Glorious Strike. He was to be chief body-guard to the man in whose innocence he had ever held perfect faith.

And then, to complete the story of 'Way-up, there was a wedding in town, at which every man "as was anythin' like a man" got gloriously drunk. Red Turner gave away the bride, and Cap Hicks insisted on performing the same for the groom.

A couple of days were spent in the little valley where those who were now man and wife had first met each other. Then, in company with Red Turner and Adam Fanshaw, Prince and Kate took the stage on their journey East to claim the fortune which an almost unknown relative had left the young man.

And Cap Hicks went with them, but not as a passenger. Not much!

He offered the regular driver a bonus for permitting him to fill his old seat at brake and ribbons, and when Glorious Strike was reached, he gave the next driver his choice between a bonus and a licking for the same privilege.

"A pretty how-de-do ef I was to let 'em be driv' by ary other durned galoot!" he sniffed, with his nose high in the air.

Adam Fanshaw resigned his trust, with scrupulous exactness. He had enough of trickery just then!

With that money, or a portion of it, the "re-discovered vein" in the 'Way-up Mine was fully developed, and finally sold for a fair price to a company who were on the lookout for something "solid."

The two partners shook hands, and Ishmael Black went his own way, and never crossed the path of our friends again.

As for Prince and Kate, they were happy, of course. And so was Red Turner, since his "gal" was happy and once more her old self. She never knew that her father had almost murdered the man who was now her husband, but naturally placed that deed at the door of George White.

Well, amid his many sins, one more could hardly wrong the rascal!

THE END.

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